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A

COMMENTARY,

WITH NOTES,

ON PART OF THE BOOK OF THE

REVELATION OF JOHN.

By the late JOHN SNODGRASS, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE MIDDLE CHURCH OF PAISLEY.

PAISLEY:

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1799.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following work, tho' incomplete, and attended with all the diſadvantages of a poſthumous publication, will be found, it is hoped, not unworthy of attention. It is the fruit of deep thought and laborious reſearch. The learned and pious author, it is well known, had carefully ſtudied the book of the Revelation of John. He had peruſed and examined with much attention the works of the moſt eminent commentators upon that intereſting portion of holy writ. In a courſe of lectures delivered during the years 1792—6, he had explained it to his congregation; and the interpretation which he had given of it, there is reaſon to believe he intended to convey to the public from the preſs. An afflicting diſorder, which at laſt terminated his valuable life, prevented the execution of this deſign. Of his manuſcript, written originally in ſhort hand, he had been able to tranſcribe but a part, and that not in perfect connection, or with all the minute attention, either to accuracy or elegance, which he would undoubtedly have given it in peruſing it with

with a view to immediate publication. What now appears is a Commentary with Notes upon chapter I. chapters IV,——XVI. inclusive, and chap. XX. 7——15. together with three Dissertations upon very curious subjects, *viz.* The Four Beasts, the Four and Twenty Elders, and the Number of the Beast. In the Commentary, which forms the body of the work, the author first endeavours to ascertain the precise import of the several prophetical visions exhibited to the apostle; and then determines, and with great probability, the successive events, in the history of the world, and in the history of the Christian church, in which those mysterious visions received their accomplishment. In the Notes subjoined to each vision he gives a concise, but clear, view of the opinions of the most celebtated commentators respecting the subject which he has discussed, and states his reasons for differing from them. Thus the work, imperfect as it is, will be found interesting and instructive. It is far from being a mere compilation of the sentiments of others; the author was well able to think for himself: in many places he will be found original: many of his conjectures are entirely his own; some of them perhaps are singular; all of them however will be acknowledged ingenious; and they who do not admit them, may,

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at leaſt, be inſtructed by the manner in which they are diſcuſſed, perhaps ſurpriſed at the evidence with which they are ſupported.

With all the proofs which this work furniſhes of the author's deep thought and great erudition, ſtill to thoſe who were ſtrangers to him, it will convey but a very inadequate idea of his eminent talents; they however who knew him will recognize him in every page; and among the candid and impartial it will be no diſcredit to his memory. His memory will be long cheriſhed and reſpected by many; and by thoſe who had acceſs to a more intimate acquaintance with him, who knew his diſtinguiſhed powers, his favourite ſtudies, and his habits of cloſe and accurate thinking, theſe remains will be highly prized as an affecting and inſtructive memorial of his eſteemed friendſhip and edifying converſation. They will peruſe with pleaſure the following delineation of his character, which formed the concluſion of a ſermon preached in the Middle Church of Paiſley on Sabbath the 1ſt day of July 1797, at the deſire of the preſbytery, on occaſion of the author's death, by his intimate friend, the Rev. Mr. Balfour of Glaſgow. His text was Heb. xiii. 7, 8. "Remember them which have "the rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you "the word of God: whoſe faith follow, conſi- "dering the end of their converſation. Jeſus "Chriſt

" Chriſt the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, and for " ever."

" If I have given a true account of the character, duties and objects of the rulers referred to in our text, ſuch ſurely ought to be the character of every public teacher of the religion of Jeſus; but, alas! how few attain to it? Highly honoured is that man, who is thus diſtinguiſhed by the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghoſt: Happy are the people who have enjoyed the paſtoral care of ſuch a ſhepherd. If ſenſible of ſuch a mercy, they cannot but mourn when deprived of it—they need, and will receive, the ſympathy of all who truly value a goſpel miniſtry.—You of this congregation ought to know its value, for you have enjoyed its higheſt advantages under one of the ableſt miniſters of the New Teſtament. I cannot think that I ſay too much, when I apply to your late worthy Paſtor every part of the deſcription in our text; for while he had the rule over you, as a ſervant of Chriſt, and the miniſter of your choice, he maintained that ſpiritual authority, only by ſpeaking to you the word of God, and exhibiting a faith and converſation becoming the goſpel. While the graces and virtues of Chriſtianity adorned his private character, theſe ſhone conſpicuous in his public office.

" His

"His faith as a Chriſtian did not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. No one was capable of nicer ſpeculations, or could more accurately inveſtigate the truth of the goſpel, and weigh every ſpecies of evidence with which it was revealed and is tranſmitted to us, yet he poſſeſſed a more divine faith, than could be inſpired or ſupported by mere reaſon. Highly cultivated as was his underſtanding, he never was aſhamed to reſign it to the ſupreme authority and influence of the truth and Spirit of God for direction and determination in every religious principle, as well as in all moral practice. Indeed he gloried in aſcribing, and in teaching others to aſcribe, every peculiarity of Chriſtian character, privilege and proſpect, to the ſovereign ſelf-moving love of God, the infinitely meritorious righteouſneſs of the Redeemer, and the effectual influence of the Holy Ghoſt.--None who knew him, will ſuppoſe, that this manner of thinking or ſpeaking proceeded from mental weakneſs, want of information, or wild enthuſiaſm.---They muſt have had very partial knowledge of him indeed, or ſtrong prejudice againſt him, who do not readily own that his natural powers were great---his ſenſe ſtrong and manly---his genius fertile---his application to every uſeful ſtudy intenſe and ſucceſsful---and his knowledge of men and books in every branch of literature uncommonly extenſive.---

Theſe

Theſe qualifications, added to a chearful, ſocial temper, while they fitted him to be an inſtructive companion, inclined him to ſocial intercourſe;---not indeed with every company, however mixed or frivolous, far leſs with the licentious or profane, but with the friends of reaſon, religion and virtue. With theſe he was always happy, and never failed to make them happy. All who were acquainted with his worth, therefore, were covetous of his improving, entertaining converſation. He knew well how to animate it with information---dignify it with argument--ſolemnize it with ſerioufneſs, and enliven it with anecdote.---What rendered his company the more agreeable and deſired, was his ability to converſe with the moſt learned, and his condeſcenſion and eaſy accommodation of himſelf to thoſe of very inferior knowledge and capacity.

"But what chiefly deſerves our attention is, that while furniſhed with real erudition, and qualified to make a conſiderable figure in the learned world, his higheſt and unceaſing ambition was to grow in and communicate ſacred, ſcriptural knowledge.--Indeed he excelled in Biblical learning, and ſacred criticiſm---theſe enabled him often to throw light on dark and difficult paſſages, and to ſtrike the attentive hearer with ingenious remark and illuſtration. With critical diſquiſition however, and a lively

a lively fancy, he always mingled ſound doctrine, ſolid practical inſtruction, and deeply impreſſive addreſs. While he ſearched the ſcriptures daily, to increaſe his own religious knowledge, he laboured to teach others how to compare ſpiritual things with ſpiritual, and to apply them to the advancement of true vital piety, and univerſal goodneſs. Conſidering the ſcriptures as divinely inſpired, and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and inſtruction in righteouſneſs, he ſo appealed to them, as to make it evident, that he never wiſhed his opinion or words to be farther regarded than they agreed with the word of God. He was ever anxious that none might receive the goſpel from him, or from any other, as the words of man, but as it is in truth the word of the living God. Thus divinely directed, and directing you, all his views in preaching centered in Chriſt, and the ſalvation which is in him. To command faith and affection, obedience and ſubmiſſion, he ſet forth and recommended the Saviour of ſinners not only by the higheſt perfection of human character, but with all the atributes of true and proper divinity; with all the merit and grace of the only appointed and accepted High Prieſt over the Houſe of God; with all the ſupreme majeſty of the King of Zion; and the almighty grace of the author of eternal ſalvation.

" As he began, ſo he uniformly conducted his miniſtry, by preaching, " not himſelf, but Chriſt " Jeſus the Lord, and himſelf your ſervant for " Jeſus' ſake." This was not only his ſubject and ſolemn profeſſion when he firſt addreſſed you from the place where I now ſtand, but it was the unvarying aim of all his miniſtrations; and what ſhould ever endear him to your memory is, that his only deſire of life was to reſume this grandeſt and moſt intereſting theme, and with his laſt powers of health and voice to preſs it upon your hearts in all its importance and influence. Of theſe things you will recollect ſtriking proofs, not only in all his ſermons, but in his prevailing temper and uniform conduct. Did he not learn of his Divine Maſter to be meek and lowly in heart and manners? Tho' he was continually adding to his ſtock of mental endowments, he was not wiſe in his own conceit, nor puffed up with his ſuperior and growing knowledge. So far was he from the pride of oſtentation and boaſting, that public duty alone brought him into view; and when diſcharged, he was glad to return to the quiet retreat and humble walks of private ſtudy and domeſtic life. This however was not the unwilling modeſty of a feeble, irreſolute, or timid mind. Few men acted with more deciſion and courage, independence and energy. When any object poſſeſſed

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real magnitude and importance, of which he was a ready and accurate judge, he ſhrunk not from the acknowledgement and purſuit of it on account of any difficulty or danger. With equal wiſdom, firmneſs and zeal he maintained it againſt all oppoſition. There can be no doubt that he was fonder of home, and of his ſtudy, than of any public appearance. But if it was difficult to draw him forth, when convinced that it was duty, he chearfully obeyed the call, and then appeared with greater advantage and more effect.

" While he yielded to conviction, he deteſted the ſuppleneſs of temporizing compliance. In the cauſe of truth, eſpecially evangelical truth, he never flinched—he fought the good fight, he kept the faith---warmly attached to the Sterling principles of civil and religious liberty, he abhorred every encroachment upon them, while he was equally a zealous and ſteady friend of lawful authority and good order. While animated with the pureſt patriotiſm, he was not leſs animated with univerſal benevolence. His great and good mind wiſhed and ſought peace and ſalvation to them who were afar off, as well as to them who are nigh. The honour and applauſe---the pleaſures and wiſhes of this world made but a ſlight impreſſion on his mind. Tho' able to fill any ſtation in the church, with perſonal credit and public honour, he never ſought

ſought great things for himſelf—while others, of much inferior talents, preſſed forward to hold the pre-eminence, he delighted in the enjoyment of the ſhade---He loved the place of his fathers---he was attached to Paiſley---he was attached to *you* of this congregation. To improve his own mind in private, and be uſeful to you in public, in promoting your beſt, your eternal intereſts, ſeemed to be the height of his ambition here.—But his great Lord found uſe for him in a better world—He is entered into his Divine Maſter's joy—*We* are left in the Vale of Tears—to lament our loſs, purſue our journey, and prepare for a happy eternal reunion in the heavenly manſions.

A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

REVELATION.

INTRODUCTION.

Introduction.

IN this Work I addreſs myſelf to thoſe who acknowledge the ſacred authority of this myſterious, but very intereſting Book, and therefore I ſhall ſcarcely take any notice of the evidence of its divine original, farther than what ariſes from the accompliſhment of the propheſies which it contains. This indeed is an evidence of the

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moſt ſatisfying nature; for it is God alone that can declare the end from the beginning, and ſhew the things that are to come hereafter. It is an evidence likewiſe that is ſtill increaſing as theſe predictions are gradually fulfilled; not only by affording additional examples of the diſcoveries which have been made by the all-diſcerning Spirit of God; but in ſtrengthening the interpretation, by the correſpondence between the connected chain of propheſy, and that of hiſtorical facts and events, in a great variety of inſtances, and through a long period of time.

Though perhaps none of the apoſtolic writings were more univerſally acknowledged than this Book, for more than an hundred years after its publication, it will not appear ſurpriſing, to thoſe who

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are acquainted with its hiſtory, that for ſome ages afterwards it ſhould have been but partially received. Reaſons abundantly convincing have been aſſigned for this, by writers upon the ſubject. But it is not a little aſtoniſhing, that its authenticity ſhould be called in queſtion by men profeſſing a zeal for the ſcripture, at this diſtant period, when the providence of that God, by whom it was inſpired, has confirmed and demonſtrated it in the ſtrongeſt manner, in the correſponding hiſtory, both of the world and of the church. This ſhews an obſtinacy of diſpoſition which is very little honourable to thoſe who poſſeſs it, becauſe there is no evading the force of this argument, but by ſome of the very ſame means which infidels have employed to undermine the credit of the ancient propheſies.

We

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We have the teſtimony of the apoſtle himſelf, that he received this Revelation while he was baniſhed in the iſle of Patmos; and we learn from the teſtimony of Antiquity, that this was in the perſecution that was raiſed againſt the Chriſtians by the Emperor Domitian. It is therefore, with good reaſon, that the learned and induſtrious Dr. Lardner has fixed the date of this Book to the year of our Lord 96. I know that ſeveral commentators, and critics of great name*, have ſtrongly contended, that it ought to be carried back to a much earlier period, and that it can ſcarcely be later than the time of Claudius, or of Nero. Thoſe who underſtand this Book, chiefly

* Grotius, Hammond, Lightfoot, Sir Iſaac Newton, Biſhop Newton, &c.

chiefly as a prophefy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the ſufferings of the Jews, are obliged, in point of conſiſtency, to ſeek for this early date. But it is rather a ſuſpicious circumſtance, when, in order to accommodate its date to a particular ſcheme of interpretation, we find the cleareſt teſtimony of Antiquity (*a*) rejected, and, in oppoſition to it, the whole evidence reſted on a vague and inconſiſtent aſſertion of a writer of acknowledged inaccuracy (*b*). This queſtion

(*a*) This teſtimony is given us by Irenæus, to whom the current opinion of the ſecond century muſt have been well known; and as he was in his early years a diſciple of Polycarp, the diſciple of John, he could ſcarcely be miſtaken about the matter of fact, having probably learned it from that venerable martyr, who delighted much in telling anecdotes concerning him.

(*b*) Epiphanius, who lived at the end of the fourth century.

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queſtion however has been diſcuſſed in a manner ſo full and ſatisfactory, that it is ſufficient to refer at the foot of the page to the writers by whom it has been treated (*c*).

I ſhall

(*c*) See Lardner, Mill, Wolfii Curæ philol. vol. Vth, and Vitringa upon the Apocalypſe. The laſt of theſe learned writers ſets the inconſiſtency of Epiphanius in ſo ſtrong a light, that I cannot forbear quoting the paſſage in his own words. ‘Epiphanius, in Alogorum haereſi exponenda et refellenda, bis memenit exilii Joannis in Patmo ſub Claudio; ſed ita, ut ipſe ſui erroris manifeſtum fuerit indicium. Prior locus in hunc modum legitur: “Ob id deinde Sp. S. Joannem, invitum licet, ac “religione quadam ac animi moderatione defugientem, ad ſcribendum evangelium impulit; affecta “jam aetate, utpote qui jam nonageſimum annum “aetatis excederet, poſtquam ex Patmo inſula re“verſus eſſet; quod quidam Claudio imperante “contigit.” Poſtquam vero, ſub finem hujus diſdiſputationis, ubi directe de Apocalypſi agit, ſic habit: “Qui cum olim, imperante Claudio Cae“ſare, vatecinium illud ediderit, cum in Patmo in“ſula

I ſhall therefore only conſider an objection which has been much inſiſted upon of late againſt the common opinion. It is this, " That the ſtile of the Apocalypſe is ſo full of Hebraiſms and barbariſms, as evinces that the author was but lately come out of Judea, was little accuſtomed to write in Greek, and had not yet attained to

" ſula verſaretur, &c." Quid ? An Joannes, quem ' conſtat vitam produxiſſe uſque ad Trajani tempora, ' ſub Claudio jam fuerit ſenex nonagenarius ? Qui, ' quo tempore Dominus ex mortuis fuerit ſuſcitatus, ' aetate adhuc fuit juvenili et vegeta, ut quis ex ip- ' ſius evangelio facili colligat. An ſi a Claudio in ' Patmum inſulam fuerit relegatus, quod volunt viri ' docti, etſi exerte non ſcribit Epiphanius, ſub ' eodem Claudio ex exilio rediit in Aſiam ? An ' haec ſibi conſtant, vel probabilia videntur ? Quare ' omnino mihi perſuadebam, in menda cubare pri- ' orem Epiphanii locum de Claudio, antequam ' hunc poſteriorem cum eo contuliſſem. Nunc vero ' nihil mihi ſupereſt niſi ut id vitio vertam ipſius im- ' prudentiae aut feſtinationis."

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to that greater purity of ſtile which appears in his Goſpels and Epiſtles." This is held forth as an unanſwerable argument, and it muſt be confeſſed that it is very ſpecious. But when it is oppoſed to clear and ſatisfying teſtimony, like other arguments, which have been ſo employed, it will be found to be of unequal weight.

That the ſtile of the Apocalypſe runs more into the Hebrew idiom, than that of the other writings of the Apoſtle, is not to be denied: but this is to be accounted for upon a very different principle from that of its early publication. The apoſtle had, for a conſiderable time, been in a great meaſure excluded from human ſociety. This circumſtance alone will account for his native idiom returning more ſtrongly upon him. But it is probable, that

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in his ſolitary exile he would be much employed in reading the ancient prophecies concerning the Meſſiah and his kingdom, and in recollecting the many wonderful things which he had heard from his bleſſed mouth; and that he would be much employed likewiſe in acts of devotion, all which would be conceived in his native language. This would increaſe the effect in a very conſiderable degree. But, above all, it muſt be obſerved, that there he was chiefly engaged in converſing with his divine Lord, with angelic beings, and with the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; that there he ſeems to have been caught up into the heavenly ſanctuary, and to have been preſent at its elevated worſhip, which was repreſented as carried on after the manner, and conſequently in the language of the temple ſervice; and that he be-

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held many wonderful viſions, where Jewiſh ſcenes, and objects, and cuſtoms, were almoſt conſtantly before him. It is not to be doubted then, that the language of theſe viſionary ſcenes muſt have been Jewiſh likewiſe, and that all the explanations which he received reſpecting them, muſt have been communicated in that language. This would bring the mind of the apoſtle as completely under the influence of the terms and idioms of his native language, as the firſt moment after he came out of Paleſtine. And when it is added, that through a great part of this book he was only performing the office of a tranſlator, and that too upon a ſubject of prophecy, where no latitude of phraſe could be permitted, but the very mode of expreſſion muſt be ſtrictly retained, I conceive it will fully account for all thoſe Hebraiſms, and even barbariſms,

barifms, as they have been called, by which this book is fo remarkably diftinguifhed, even from the earlier writings of this apoftle.

Let us beware however of imagining that the language of this Book, to which the feverity of criticifm has been fo liberally applied, is calculated either to disfigure, or to difgrace the truths which it contains. On the contrary, by imbibing the fpirit of an ancient language, diftinguifhed alike for its fimplicity and its vigour, it is perhaps the more accommodated to the importance and elevation of the fubject upon which it is employed; and by the air of antiquity which it has thus acquired, it preferves to prophecy its folemn, and its venerable afpect. I only add, that in the judgement even of the learned Bengelius himfelf, notwithftanding its want of elegance and polifh, it becomes

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comes pleaſant, by cuſtom, and has a dignity belonging to it that is ſuited to the court of heaven (*a*).

We ſee then that the grand argument, for the early publication of this book, falls entirely to the ground, and that (*b*) there is no ſufficient

(*a*) "Hebraiſmus," ſays he in his Adparatus criticus, "regnat libro, prima ſpecie inſolens et aſper, "ſed revera cum adſueveris, non ſolum tolerabilis, "ſed etiam dulcis, ac plane cœleſtis ſtilo curiæ "dignus."

(*b*) I have omitted the authority of ſo late and ſo obſcure a writer as Aretas for the early publication of this book, as unworthy of notice. I have likewiſe paſſed over the ſtory which is told by Clemens Alexandrinus, reſpecting a young man, whom John, after his return from Patmos, committed to a certain biſhop, and whom, when he had afterwards become the leader of a band of thieves, he purſued, riding and running after him, with a kind of youthful vigour, as too vague and uncertain to found any argument upon it. It is told by a perſon who lived at a great diſtance, and had little opportunity of examining into the truth. It is a

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ficient reaſon for departing from the date which we have already aſſigned it. The apoſtle had committed it to writing in the time of his baniſhment in the iſle of Patmos, but it probably could not be publiſhed till his releaſe; and it is evident, that the whole firſt chapter is only a ſort of proem or introduction, which the apoſtle drew up after he had left the iſland, and when he was about to ſend it abroad among the Aſiatic churches.

This

ſtory almoſt without a name. Neither the young man himſelf ſeems to have been known, nor the biſhop to whom he was committed, nor the city in which he lived. The only circumſtance that is taken notice of, is that which is leaſt likely to have been remembered, the circumſtance of the time in which it happened. The ſtory likewiſe bears ſtrong marks of exaggeration upon it, and therefore it is not improbable that it might at length be fixed to an advanced period of the apoſtle's life, in order to render it the more marvellous.

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This preliminary part, even in point of taſte, and propriety of compoſition, might ſtand the teſt of the niceſt criticiſm. By the ſimplicity of the narration the ſenſe is obvious at once. By the affectionateneſs of the addreſs, the heart is touched and engaged. By the character and circumſtances of the writer, a venerable apoſtle and father, juſt emerged from ſuffering, bearing his Maſter's meſſage, which he had received in his ſequeſtered ſolitude, the mind is compoſed into the moſt devout attention: and by the ſtriking ſcene which he begins to open, the imagination itſelf is awakened, our ſpiritual curioſity, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, is rouſed, and we are put into a proper poſture and frame for contemplating all the intereſting wonders that are afterwards to be diſcloſed.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION I.

ON THE FOUR BEASTS,

Deſcribed Rev. iv. 6, 7, 8.

6. ——And in the midſt of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beaſts, full of eyes before and behind.

7. And the firſt beaſt was like a lion, and the ſecond beaſt like a calf, and the third beaſt had a face as a man, and the fourth beaſt was like a flying eagle.

8. And the four beaſts had each of them ſix wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; and they reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

THIS group of figures forms one of the moſt difficult of ſymbolical repreſentations. We know ſo little of the apparatus that belongs to

Differt. 1

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to the throne and majeſty of God, that we muſt feel ourſelves particularly at a loſs in attempting to decypher a ſet of emblems ſo ſublimely myſterious. The impropriety of our tranſlation, in calling them " Beaſts," has been often obſerved; yet it is difficult to ſubſtitute another appellation in its room, which ſhall not be liable to exception. When we reflect that the Hebrew noun חיה, which Ezekiel uſes in a ſimilar viſion, as John does ζωον in this, is properly applied only to living ſubſtances of the brute creation, the expreſſions, " Animate beings, Living creatures," and ſuch like, which have been conſidered as improved tranſlations, will be found far too general and indefinite. Indeed it is abundantly evident, that it was ſome kind of animal forms which both the prophet and the apoſtle

poſtle meant to expreſs by the terms they have made uſe of; and theſe they deſcribe with as great clearneſs of language as the ſubject will admit of. At the ſame time it is to be obſerved, that they were no real ſubſtances which they beheld, but only emblematical figures, ſhadowing forth ſome kind of intelligences, under animal appearances and forms. But the great queſtion upon this viſion of the apoſtle is, what thoſe intelligences are which are thus repreſented? In anſwer to this queſtion I obſerve, that, for various reaſons, they cannot be underſtood of Chriſtian churches towards the four corners of the world, repreſented, as the venerable Mede ſuppoſes, by four animals, in alluſion to the figures upon the ſtandards of the four camps of the Iſraelites, around the tabernacle in

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the wilderneſs. For, firſt, theſe intelligences, whatever they repreſent, performed ſuch offices as the church cannot do. They called the attention of John to the events which were to take place at the opening of four of the ſeals; and one of them gave to the ſeven angels the ſeven vials full of the wrath of God: and (chap. xiv.) they are repreſented as diſtinct from the true church, which is introduced ſinging a new ſong before them. With reſpect to the alluſion which is here ſuppoſed, there is no ſufficient reaſon to believe that there were any ſuch figures upon the ſtandards of the Iſraelites. The opinion has no better foundation than a bare Jewiſh tradition, without the ſmalleſt intimation in ſcripture to ſupport it.

it (*a*). And it is by no means probable, that the Jews, conſidering their natural proneneſs to idolatry, ſhould have been permitted to have ſuch a ſtrong incitement to it, as the figures of animals upon the ſtandards, after which they were to march in their journey through the wilderneſs. If this had been the caſe, they might with more propriety have ſaid of them, than of the golden calf, "Theſe be thy "Gods, O Iſrael, which brought "thee up out of the land of Egypt." It

(*a*) It is true that Mede underſtands חיתך Pſal. lxviii. 10. as referring to thoſe figures, and renders it, after Jerom, "Animalia tua." But it ſeems to be uſed there in a ſenſe ſomewhat uncommon, to denote what ſuſtains life; as it does Iſa. lvii. 10. and Bp. Lowth tranſlates the verſe "(as for) *thy victual*, i. e. the food which thou "gaveſt them, they dwelt in (the midſt) of it." See Exod. xvi. 13—15. Num. xi. 31, 32. See alſo Parkhurſt's Lexicon חיה.

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It is likewiſe to be obſerved, that, upon this principle, the viſion does not give us a juſt repreſentation of the fact; for it makes the congregation nearer to the throne than the elders or prieſts; whereas, in the wilderneſs, theſe laſt were neareſt the tabernacle, and the congregation was encamped around them (*a*).

I only

(*a*) Mede endeavours to make the viſion and the fact to agree by a moſt arbitrary interpretation: He underſtands the words, εν μεσω του θρονου και κυκλω του θρονου, to ſignify, in the middle of the ſides of a quadrangle, on the outſide of the elders, having a common center with the throne, which he ſuppoſes to be quadrangular likewiſe. But this interpretation is too artificial and ſtrained for the ingenious author ever to have propoſed, had it not been neceſſary to the ſcheme he had adopted. Do not the words, εν μεσω του θρονου και κυκλω του θρονου, much more naturally denote the near ſpace about the throne (which probably was of a tranſparent nature) ſo near indeed, that to the eye of the apoſtle, at a diſtance, ſome of the figures

I only add one other circumſtance, which overturns the whole ſcheme of interpretation founded on this opinion, which is, that the order in which the beaſts are enumerated in the viſion, does not agree with their ſuppoſed order upon the ſtandards of Iſrael. In the viſion, the calf is the ſecond, and the man the third; but in the account of the encampment, Numb. ii. the calf, ſuppoſed to be Ephraim's ſtandard, is the third, and the man, ſuppoſed to be Reuben's, is the ſecond. This, therefore, muſt occaſion an unavoidable miſtake, in looking for the accompliſhment of the firſt four ſeals, as Mede and his followers do, from thoſe reſpective quarters, where the figures were ſuppoſed anciently to be ſtationed.

For

figures would appear as within the throne, while others were ſtanding around it?

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For ſeveral of the reaſons already mentioned, the ſimilar curious interpretation which Dr. Wall propoſes muſt likewiſe be rejected. He conceives theſe beaſts to be four churches, keeping up the conſtant uſe of prayer and praiſe, (they and the four and twenty elders belonging to them), or rather the Chriſtian church in four ſeveral ages. Firſt, the primitive church, like a lion, with the ſtrength of faith and patience. The ſecond, like an ox, labouring under hardſhip and perſecutions, and incumbrances of heretics, till the time of Conſtantine. The third, under the Chriſtian emperors, had a face like a man. The fourth, the church in the time of the apoſtacy; it is repreſented, ch. xii. 14. as having two wings of a great eagle, to fly into the wilderneſs; and here, the repreſentation

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is of an eagle flying. He further obſerves, that ch. v. 9 ſhews plainly, that both they and the four and twenty elders muſt have been Chriſtians, and out of ſeveral nations; and, ver. 14. they ſaid *Amen* to the prayers and praiſes of the angels, and of all earthly and heavenly creatures. And as the voice of one of theſe animals was like thunder, chap. vi. 1. he quotes St. Jerom, ſaying, that the *Amen* of a large congregation of Chriſtians uſed to be ſo in his time. This interpretation, it muſt be allowed, is ingeniouſly fancied. But a queſtion occurs, not very conſiſtent with it; namely, why was not the period after the apoſtacy repreſented likewiſe by another animal; for if this were the meaning of the viſion, it is ſcarcely to be thought, that ſuch a glorious ſtate of the church would be

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be entirely neglected; not to mention that it would be much more properly represented, as having a face like a man, than that under Constantine. But, it appears from the reasons already assigned, respecting the offices of these emblematical figures, that they cannot be understood of Christian churches in any situation or in any period. I shall have occasion afterwards to shew, that their being thought to join with the elders in singing the song of the redeemed, is indeed a misapprehension, and with respect to the amen which this curious annotator takes notice of, it certainly was not that expression which the first beast uttered, when his voice was like thunder, but a very solemn call of attention, which no Christian congregation could be supposed to deliver.

The

The ſame reaſons conclude as ſtrongly againſt theſe beaſts being emblematical of the excellent and zealous miniſters of the goſpel, which ſeems to be a favourite and prevailing opinion among expoſitors.

But the moſt extraordinary interpretation of theſe myſterious figures is that of the learned and entertaining Parkhurſt, who underſtands them to be cherubic animals, emblematical of the ever bleſſed Trinity, in covenant to redeem man, by uniting the human nature to the ſecond Perſon. This interpretation he has drawn up in a very ingenious and plauſible form, and has endeavoured to ſupport it by a variety of paſſages, both in the Old and New Teſtament ſcriptures. One inſuperable objection, as may be thought, he ſeems to get over with the greateſt eaſe; I mean that which

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ariſes from the beaſts repeating that ſolemn adoration, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come:* and likewiſe falling down before the Lamb, and worſhipping God who ſat upon the throne. His anſwer to the firſt part of this objection, he thinks is as ſatisfactory as it is ſhort; namely, that the emblems are repreſented as confeſſing to the realities, and proclaiming the glory of that *Holy, holy, holy Lord*, three perſons and one Jehovah, in the knowledge of whoſe power, unity, perſonality, and union with man, they were intended in the moſt ſtriking and convincing manner to inſtruct mankind. But how is it poſſible they could have this intention, when, in order to underſtand them, we muſt firſt be acquainted with a very obſcure and fanciful philoſophy, the very principles

ciples of which are far removed from the ordinary courſe of human inveſtigation. Were mankind indeed as much verſant, as our learned and ingenious author, in what he calls the material trinity of nature; the fluid of the heavens, conſiſting of the fire at the orb of the ſun, repreſenting the Father; the light iſſuing from it, denoting the Word; and the groſs air, conſtantly ſupporting and concurring to the actions and effects of the other two, repreſenting the Holy Ghoſt:—had they faculties to perceive as clearly as he, that the ox or bull, on account of his horns, the curling hair on his forehead, and his unrelenting fury when provoked, is a very proper emblem of fire; that the lion, from his uſual tawny, gold-like colour, his flowing mane, his ſhining eyes, and

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and his prodigious ſtrength, is a proper emblem of light; and likewiſe the eagle, of the ſpirit, or air in action, from his being chief among fowls, from his impetuous motion, and from his towering and ſurpriſing flights in the air—were they as fully perſuaded as he, of of the ſolidity and juſtneſs of theſe ſtrangely fancied emblems, then there might be ſome ground for imagining that they were intended to inſtruct mankind, in the moſt ſtriking and convincing manner, in the important doctrines which have been mentioned, as well as in the doctrine of man taken into the eſſence, by the union of the faces of the lion and the man. But as theſe are attainments which, it is to be feared, very few can boaſt of, it is certainly not to be credited, that when God meant to inſtruct mankind

kind, in the moſt ſtriking and convincing manner, in ſome of the moſt precious truths which revelation contains, he ſhould ſpeak to them in a language which ſcarcely any could underſtand. With reſpect to the cherubic animals falling down before the Lamb, and worſhipping God who ſat upon the throne, he thinks that nothing more was meant by this, than either a ceſſion of the adminiſtration of all divine power to Chriſt, God-man; or a declaration of the divine perſons by their hieroglyphical repreſentatives, that he muſt reign till his enemies are made his footſtool. This he grounds upon proſtration being the uſual ſymbolical act, as it ſtill is in the eaſt, not only of divine worſhip, but of acknowledging the regal power to be in the perſon ſo worſhipped. But the ſame

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ſame obſervation will apply to this anſwer as to the former. For how improbable is it, that a doctrine of ſuch vaſt moment as that of our Lord's ſupreme and univerſal dominion, which is taught ſo clearly in other parts of ſcripture, ſhould, under the notion of additional information, be intimated in this lateſt book of the ſacred canon in ſo obſcure a manner, that not one of a thouſand can apprehend the meaning.

We have therefore ample reaſon to conclude, that theſe myſterious figures are not emblematical of the ever bleſſed Trinity, in covenant to redeem man by the union of the human nature to the ſecond Perſon; and we have ſeen that they cannot denote Chriſtian churches in the different corners of the world, or in different periods of time; nor can they

they denote the excellent and zealous miniſters of the goſpel. They muſt however be underſtood of created intelligences, but intelligences probably of the moſt exalted kind. Of this, their nearneſs to the throne of God is a high indication. Ezekiel's viſionary forms ſeem to have been appendages of the throne which was then in motion. Therefore they moved as it moved, and ſtood when it ſtood. But here the throne is at reſt, and they are ſtationed in the circle, or ſpace, immediately around it. With reſpect to ſuperior created intelligences, they ſeem all to be compriſed under the general appellation of angels. But we know not what gradations of being this appellation may contain. Angels do not, like men, ſpring from one common and original ſtock; a circumſtance

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cumstance which necessarily bounds and narrows the distinctions among the race, so that a general sameness of intellectual character must pervade the whole. Their faculties are probably much more diversified; and we have reason to think, that there are gradations among them of a very elevated range. Nay, it is not unlikely, that there may be some individuals among them as far superior to the rest, as these are to the human species; and as angelic spirits are constantly exhibited in scripture as the attendants upon the Divine Majesty, and as the ministers of the heavenly court, it may naturally be supposed, that those individuals who are of the most exalted character, would occupy such a station as that which is here assigned to these animal appearances, and forms, and therefore they

they may well be underſtood, I will not ſay, to be repreſented by them, for a reaſon which will afterwards occur, but to be concealed under them. Diſſert. I.

But indeed it is not of ſo great importance to inquire minutely into the character of theſe intelligences, or whether there are only four of this high and ſupereminent character, as to diſcover the purpoſe for which they are introduced. I am inclined to think, that they act here entirely in an official capacity; and that they are introduced, in alluſion to the pomp and magnificence of the oriental courts, to perform ſuch offices as are calculated to ſtrike the minds of the ſpectators with ſolemnity and awe. To this every thing that is ſaid reſpecting them exactly agrees. Their acts of worſhip are all ſuch

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as indicate an official character. They are few in number: they are little varied; and they are performed in ſuch circumſtances as heighten the grandeur and ſolemnity of the ſcene. Their divine eulogium, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come*, which they are repreſented as inceſſantly repeating, cannot be ſo naturally underſtood in any other ſenſe as that of a public and ſolemn proclamation, fitted to rouſe and to maintain the deepeſt veneration in all who hear it. In the ſame official character they ſeem to be repreſented, ſometimes beginning the high celeſtial anthems, and giving *glory, and honour, and thanks to Him that ſat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever;* ſometimes again, concluding with a loud

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and ſolemn *Amen.* And this is the ſubſtance of all that is recorded reſpecting their acts of worſhip. The other offices which they performed, mark the ſame diſtinctive and public character. Each of them, in his turn, announced the ſcenes which were diſplayed at the opening of the firſt four ſeals, not to John only, but likewiſe, as appears from the whole ſtrain of the deſcription, to all the heavenly inhabitants, angels as well as men, and called their attention to behold them. And when the vengeance of God was to be completely executed upon the enemies of his church and people, one of them was the miniſtering ſpirit, who ſolemnly delivered the vials of the fierceneſs of his wrath into the hands of the angels who were commiſſioned to pour them out. Theſe intelligences then

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appear evidently to be exhibited in an official capacity, and to be diſtinguiſhed as the immediate miniſters about the throne and majeſty of JEHOVAH. That they poſſeſs extenſive and elevated capacities, might well be preſumed from the dignified ſtation which they held. But their penetrating and comprehenſive knowledge is intimated by their being full of eyes before and behind, and likewiſe from within, probably in the parts that were covered with their wings; ſo that, to uſe a ſcripture expreſſion, "their "whole bodies were full of light."

But it remains to be inquired, why they are exhibited under theſe animal appearances and forms, one like a lion, another like a calf, a third like a man, and a fourth like a flying eagle. Theſe muſt certainly be of myſtical import, and it is not

not an eaſy matter diſtinctly to decypher them. In vain ſhall we attempt it by expounding them of the ſuppoſed qualities of theſe intelligences themſelves. They ſeem rather to be emblematical of the conduct of Providence, reſpecting both the people of God, and his enemies. In this view, how admirably are the vigour and energy of its diſpenſations ſhadowed forth by the overpowering ſtrength of the lion! Whatever he ſhall chooſe to protect, or defend, muſt be in abſolute ſafety; and, on the other hand, whatever is the object of his vengeance muſt be unavoidably deſtroyed. The generoſity, indeed, of that animal to the ſubmiſſive [a], ſeems a kind of exception. But this

[a] Nobilis eſt ira leonis,
Parcere ſubjectis et debellare ſuperbos.

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this marks another very comfortable part of the divine providence; that when men are duly affected with their guilt, in the midſt of wrath God remembers mercy, and mercy rejoiceth againſt judgment. How happily again does the ox denote the long-ſuffering patience of God in his conduct towards the wicked; while, at the ſame time, the ſlow, but conſtant, progreſſive motion of that animal awfully intimates, that judgement, though it may ſeem to linger, ſhall at length infallibly reach the impenitent. In the human character we behold the features of juſtice, and mercy, and truth, all combined; and how ſignificantly does this inform us, that the conduct of Providence proceeds upon thoſe great principles; and that, while God viſits the wicked with his righteous judgements, he

he compaſſionates the ſufferings of his ſaints; he regards them with the tendereſt care, and will at length deliver them out of all their troubles. Finally, when the judgements of God are to be ſpeedily and awfully executed, what can more ſtrikingly denote this than the rapidity of the eagle, darting down upon his prey, and inſtantly tearing it to pieces! Accordingly it is remarkable, that the fourth beaſt is that of an eagle flying; an attitude in which he ſeldom or never appears but when he is in queſt of the wretched victims of his rapacity. Here then we have a ſet of figures of the moſt ſignificant and inſtructive kind. They appear to be appendages of the throne and majeſty of God; to intimate, by ſtriking emblems, what the ſcripture has repeatedly declared, that juſtice

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" juſtice and judgement are the " habitation of his throne," and that " mercy and truth go before " his face." And they are exhibited with ſingular propriety in a viſion which ſtands connected with the evolution of a long ſeries of prophetical events, in which power, and judgment, and mercy, and truth, are eminently and affectingly diſplayed.

The only objection of conſequence againſt this interpretation is that which has been already alluded to; namely, that theſe intelligences muſt be underſtood of Chriſtians, becauſe they are repreſented, along with the four and twenty elders, as falling down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, and ſaying, *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeven ſeals thereof,*

thereof, for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation *. But this objection has been long ago ſo fully anſwered, that I have only to obſerve, with ſeveral judicious and learned interpreters, that if the above paſſage be ſtrictly examined, it will appear that the words, *having every one of them* [a]—— may properly be reſtricted to *the elders*, the more immediate antecedent, with which they fully agree, and therefore that the words, *Thou haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood*, may be underſtood to be the words of the elders alone, and not of the four beaſts, who are only repreſented as falling down in humble adoration before the Lamb, and ratifying all that was ſaid by the elders,

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* Rev. v. 8, 9.

[a] ἔχοντες ἕκαστος.

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and afterwards by the angels about the throne, and all heavenly and earthly creatures, by ſubjoining their *amen*. Similar paſſages of ſcripture confirm this interpretation, in which the beginning of a ſentence expreſſes different objects, while only ſome of them are referred to in the concluſion. Of this, Jeremiah xxi. 7. ſhall ſuffice at preſent for an example, where God declares by that prophet, that he would deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his ſervants, and the people, and ſuch as were left in the city—into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that he ſhould ſmite them with the edge of the ſword. But we know, from Jer. xxxiv. 4. that this laſt expreſſion does not refer to Zedekiah, for he was not to die by the ſword, but to die in peace.

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DISSERTATION II.

ON THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS.

Rev. iv. 4.

And round about the throne were four and twenty ſeats, and upon the ſeats I ſaw four and twenty elders ſitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

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IT has been matter of much inquiry, what we are to underſtand by theſe four and twenty elders that were ſeated about the throne, each on a ſeat, or little throne, apart by himſelf. The queſtion is ſtill involved in obſcurity. An attempt, therefore, to ſet this point in a clear and ſatisfying light, it is hoped,

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hoped, may not be unacceptable. To give a detail of the various opinions of expoſitors reſpecting it would be tedious, and, in ſome inſtances, unintereſting. Particularly, were we to diſplay ſuch fanciful opinions as this, That they are the four and twenty books of the Old Teſtament (though theſe books are preciſely double that number) ſitting as wiſe ſenators, and conſulting in God's cauſe. It is curious, however, how ſome of the moſt judicious expoſitors have reverſed each other's ſentiments upon this and the foregoing point. Mede underſtands the four and twenty elders to denote the miniſters, or rather the biſhops and rulers of the church, and the four beaſts to be the body of Chriſtians; in which interpretation he ſeems to be followed by Sir Iſaac Newton, and Biſhop

Biſhop Newton; while Durham, Vitringa, Jurieu, and others, take quite the oppoſite ſide, and conceive the four beaſts to repreſent Chriſtian miniſters, and the four and twenty elders the Chriſtian people. Yet theſe, contradictory as they are to one another, are the moſt plauſible interpretations of the emblematical meaning of the four and twenty elders which have hitherto been propoſed. But the ſeveral parts of the deſcription will not agree to either of theſe interpretations. How very improperly is the church on earth ſuppoſed to be figured by elders, when it conſiſts in a great meaſure of babes in Chriſt, as well as thoſe who are of full age, and exerciſes no authority but by its rulers! By this interpretation all our ideas of the juſt applications of imagery are confounded

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ed and loſt. It is true, indeed, that Chriſtians are repreſented in ſcripture as a royal prieſthood. But this is in quite a different ſenſe, intimating, that they are admitted to near acceſs to God, and raiſed to an exalted dignity, in virtue of their union to Chriſt: and to put it beyond a doubt that theſe emblematical perſons cannot denote the body of Chriſtians either in heaven, or upon earth, we find that great body, in the following chapter, introduced, not only after the elders, but after the angels alſo, under the deſcription of every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, and in the ſea, offering their tribute of adoration and praiſe to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Beſides, upon either of theſe interpretations, what ſatisfying account can be given of the

the number twenty-four, of which the elders conſiſt? Where is the Chriſtian church, or where are Chriſtian miniſters, either in this prophecy, or in any other part of ſcripture, repreſented by ſuch a number? The ſuppoſition that it alludes to the twelve patriarchs, and twelve apoſtles, does not accord with either interpretation: and the more ingenious conjecture of Mede, that it alludes to the Prieſts and Levites in the encampment of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, who were afterwards divided into twenty-four courſes, ſtands at variance with the fact in ſome important circumſtances. For, firſt, as Markeus juſtly obſerves, theſe Prieſts and Levites were not ſeated on thrones. It is further to be remarked, that if theſe are the perſons who are here referred to, they

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they muſt be underſtood to be exhibited in their ſacerdotal robes, which they never appeared in all at once, but only by turns, and when they were performing the duties of their ſacred office. Beſides, if this were the model from which the deſcription is taken, as the elders ſeem to perform the office of ſingers, as well as of prieſts, their number ſhould have been forty-eight at leaſt; nay, if the the Levites are to be included, no leſs than ſeventy-two; for there were twenty-four courſes of ſingers appointed by David, ſuitable to the twenty-four courſes of Prieſts and twenty-four of Levites. We muſt therefore relinquiſh theſe interpretations as inconſiſtent with juſt imagery, diſcordant with fact, and therefore, in all probability, unilluſtrative of the objects which the

the ſpirit of prophecy had here in view.

It is of much importance to obſerve, that the figures in theſe viſions have not only an emblematical, but likewiſe a prophetical meaning. We have ſeen this already, in the proſpects of providence which the four beaſts exhibit, and therefore it is not unnatural to ſuppoſe, that ſomething prophetical may likewiſe be intended by the four and twenty elders. It will readily be allowed, that if there had been only twelve elders, inſtead of four and twenty, they would have been underſtood of the twelve apoſtles, and of them alone; and I confeſs I am inclined to think that, by keeping them in our eye, we may ſtill arrive at the true interpretation. To them every part of the deſcription agrees,

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the number alone excepted; and this, I conceive, is to be accounted for from ſome events which are predicted in the courſe of theſe prophecies, and which thoſe ſacred perſonages, who are here introduced, were probably intended to repreſent. It is a melancholy truth, that the primitive church which was formed by the apoſtles, after having triumphed over the pride of Paganiſm, fell into obſcurity, and was gradually diminiſhed, till at length it ſeems to have been loſt, the two witneſſes, who had propheſied ſo long in ſackcloth, being ſlain. This, however, was only like the ſeed which dies before it is reproduced. The church was to revive; and, in her ſecond appearance, was to attain a far greater extent and luſtre than in her firſt. This was to be accompliſhed under the

the influence of the apoſtolic doctrine, and the exertions of apoſtolic men, whom God was to raiſe up and qualify for the arduous enterpriſe, by pouring out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary meaſure. With what eaſy ſimplicity then, was this glorious event, the future renovation of the church, repreſented, by adding theſe ſecond apoſtles, if I may ſo denominate them, unto the firſt, and in the anticipating ſtile of prophecy, exhibiting them both together in the character of four and twenty elders, ſitting in triumph around the throne. Only admit this interpretation for a moment, and obſerve, how exactly it accords with every circumſtance which is related concerning them. The very name *Elder* is a title of office, an appellation of high reſpect; and, as we learn from ſcripture, not unworthy even of an apoſtle. The perſons

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ſons thus repreſented, had early diſcoveries of what was afterwards to be more fully revealed, as holy and inſpired men might be ſuppoſed to have; and therefore one of them was able to comfort John, who appeared there only in the character of a ſpectator, though not an unintereſted one, by informing him, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof. The white robes, in which they were clothed, denote their high acceptance with God, both in their character, and in their ſervice. The crowns of gold upon their heads, and the thrones upon which they are ſeated, denote their dignity, and victory, and triumph. And by the harps, and golden vials in their hands, they are elegantly repreſented leading on the prayers and

and the praiſes of a people yet unborn, who were to be called and ſanctified unto the Lord. As a ſpecimen of that animated ſervice, they offer a high aſcription of praiſe and adoration to the Lamb for his redeeming grace, and for the exalted honour to which they were raiſed, in being made kings and prieſts unto God, in the proſpect of that glorious period when, in the triumphs of religion, they ſhould reign upon the earth. Accordingly, it is not a little remarkable, that the only occaſions upon which we find them introduced, are thoſe which have reſpect to that elevated ſtate of the church on earth, chap. xix. 4. They are introduced, at the deſtruction of Babylon, upon the near approach of the latter day glory, falling down and worſhipping God, *who ſat upon the throne, ſaying,*

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ing, in addition to the praiſes of the ſaints, *Amen: Hallelujah.* Likewiſe, at the ſound of the ſeventh trumpet, when there were great voices in heaven, ſaying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever and ever*, the four and twenty elders, who ſat before God on their ſeats, fell upon their faces, and worſhipped God, ſaying, *We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty! who art, and waſt, and art to come, becauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great power and haſt reigned.* And when the great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, ſinging their ſong of thankſgiving and triumph, one of the elders ſhews plainly how deeply he was intereſted in their happineſs, by exciting the attentive curioſity

curioſity of John, that he might deſcribe them to him.

Theſe circumſtances lead us plainly to perceive to what great objects the attention of the elders was particularly turned; that they were the future triumphs of the church to which they were to miniſter. It is not neceſſary to determine whether there ſhall be preciſely twelve perſons who ſhall be the leading inſtruments in raiſing up the church at the glorious period already mentioned, and who ſhall be ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed by the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that they may be ranked in ſome reſpect with the apoſtles themſelves. I ſee no impropriety however in ſuppoſing that this may be really the caſe. But it is ſufficient for the purpoſe of this viſion, that men of ſuch a ſpirit ſhall then be raiſed up,

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up, eminently qualified for the arduous work, and remarkably diſtinguiſhed for their ſucceſs in it. I ſhall only further obſerve, that it is perfectly in the manner of ſcripture to repreſent eminent ſaints long ſince gone into heaven, as appearing upon earth again, when others of a ſimilar ſpirit come in their room. In this very prophecy, for inſtance, the ancient martyrs are repreſented as raiſed from the dead, when perſons of their ſuperior character and temper ſhall appear again in the church. It was in like manner foretold, that Elias ſhould come again before the appearance of the Meſſiah: but we know, from the event, that it was not Elias to whom the prediction referred, but a perſon of a ſimilar character, John the Baptiſt. If then it had been the deſign of prophecy

phecy, upon any occaſion, ſymbolically to repreſent the two reformations that were to be effected by theſe extraordinary men, how could this have been more ſimply, and at the ſame time more ſignificantly done, than by an exhibition of two Eliaſes inſtead of one? In like manner; what can more naturally repreſent a firſt and ſecond converſion of the world to Chriſtianity, than the doubling of the number of apoſtles, as the dignified inſtruments by whom they ſhould both be accompliſhed?

A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

REVELATION.

CHAP. I.

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THE firſt three verſes are properly the title of the book, and although, at firſt ſight, they ſeem to have been prefixed by a different hand, yet this is not probable, as we know of no inſpired man to whom it may be aſcribed, and as it is much in the manner of this apoſtle to ſpeak of himſelf in the third perſon,

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ſon *, which, by the way, is one of the internal proofs of the authenticity and genuineneſs of the whole.

EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE.

Verſe 1. *The Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which God gave unto him, to ſhew unto his ſervants things which muſt ſhortly come to paſs, and he ſent and ſignified it by his angel unto his ſervant John.*

This book is called a *Revelation*, which properly ſignifies a diſcovery, or manifeſtation, of any object that lies out of view. Here it ſignifies a prophetical diſcovery of the future events relating to the ſtate and circumſtances of the church, and of the world, ſo far as they ſtand connected with one another, from

* See John xix. 26, 35. and xxi. 20, 24.

from the days of this apoſtle to the end of time. It is called *the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe this diſcovery was made by him. It is added, *which God gave unto him*, which can be underſtood only in reſpect of his mediatorial character: that he might *ſhew unto his ſervants*, including in this appellation, the miniſters of the goſpel, and likewiſe all the ſaints: *the things which muſt ſhortly come to paſs;* meaning thoſe great prophetical events which were ſoon to begin to receive their accompliſhment: *and he ſent and ſignified it by his angel unto his ſervant John*, employing, as appears from the ſubſequent part of this book, ſometimes one, ſometimes another of thoſe celeſtial ſpirits to aſſiſt the apoſtle in apprehending the viſions which he beheld[a].

Verſe

[a] Mr. Lowman and others obſerve, that, in the ſtyle

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Verſe 2. *Who bare record* [b] *of the word of God, and of the teſtimony* [c] *of Jeſus Chriſt, and of all things that he ſaw*—giving a faithful account of the ſcheme of

ſtyle of prophecy, every thing is called an angel that notifies a meſſage from God; and are of opinion, that all that is meant by the expreſſion here is, that John received the revelation in viſions, or ſenſible repreſentations: But it is evident, that this is a plain and ſimple narration, and therefore is to be underſtood in the common meaning of language.

[b] This is likewiſe perfectly in the manner of the apoſtle John. See John xix. 35.

[c] I cannot think, with ſome learned expoſitors, that the apoſtle here refers to what he had formerly teſtified or recorded in his goſpel. It is certainly more natural to underſtand him as referring to the revelation of which he was juſt now ſpeaking, and upon the detail of which he was immediately to enter; and when we conſider the nature of that revelation, it determines the ſenſe of theſe expreſſions, *the word of God*, to the ſcheme of things which is there diſcloſed, and the *teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt* ſeems beſt to be underſtood, not

of divine providence and grace, which was certified to him in the ſtrongeſt manner by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, in the various and wonderful viſions which he laid open before him.

Theſe aſtoniſhing diſcoveries the apoſtle well knew to be of the greateſt importance to Chriſtians, and therefore he takes the earlieſt opportunity of recommending them to their moſt earneſt attention, by the following ſtriking obſervation.

Verſe 3. *Bleſſed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep thoſe things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.*

Thoſe

not of the teſtimony to his character, which is contained in this book, but of the teſtimony which he gave to the things which the apoſtle heard and ſaw. See chap. xxii. 20.

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Thoſe who attend to the repreſentations which are here exhibited, ſhall derive great inſtruction and benefit from them. By contemplating before hand the important events of Providence that are afterwards to be realized, they ſhall come prepared to every occurrence when it arrives, and ſhall feel themſelves enabled to look forward to the end of all things with confidence and joy. And even at that early period it was immediately intereſting to the church, becauſe the time when they were to begin to be accompliſhed was very near.

OF THE ADDRESS AND SALUTATION.

This book, by its being inſcribed to particular churches, hath ſomething of the form and appearance of an epiſtle. But this appearance

ance is instantly dropped; and, except when addressing unto them the epistles of Christ, the writer takes no further notice of them, either by direction, or reproof, or encouragement, through the whole of the narration. He expresses no particular affection for them, does not request their prayers, sends no salutations of the Christians to them, but only concludes with a short form of benediction.

The address runs in the following simple terms.

Ver. 4. *John, to the seven churches which are in Asia*;—which seven churches are afterwards particularly named. Perhaps it may here be proper to observe, that, though this book was addressed equally to all those churches, it is not likely that the apostle would send more than one copy among them, especially

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conſidering his great age, and the time and labour which would be neceſſary to write ſo large a book (a). It is probable that this copy would be left at Epheſus, a place for which he

(a) The infirmities which the apoſtle muſt then have felt, add further evidence to this opinion. Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory repreſents him as under great bodily weakneſs after his return from Patmos; as able to do little more than repeat his favourite exhortation to Chriſtian charity or love. The poor accommodation, and ſcanty ſubſiſtence which he received, during his baniſhment, would naturally bear hard upon his conſtitution, and very probably the intenſeneſs of the extaſy in which he muſt often have been held, and the radiance of the viſions which were diſplayed before him, would contribute to produce a greater degree of debility than he would otherwiſe have experienced. At any rate, how little is to be expected, in the way of bodily labour, from an old man at nearly the age of an hundred years. All theſe things conſidered, the writing out of a ſingle copy was perhaps too much for him to do, had it not been done at intervals in Patmos, ſo that he had nothing but the introduction to prefix to it afterwards.

he ſeems to have had a particular favour. Poſſibly he might reſide there at that very time, and deliver it to the angel, or miniſter, of that church, with his own hand; with an injunction to ſend it to the other churches, that they might take copies of it, and return it.

The manner of the ſalutation differs conſiderably from that of the other epiſtolary writings. The apoſtle ſays, *Grace be unto you and peace*, thereby undoubtedly praying for all ſpiritual bleſſings to them. He adds—*From him which is, and which was, and which is to come*—by whom he evidently means the Father. But the difficulty lies in underſtanding the following expreſſions, when he ſubjoins—*and from the ſeven ſpirits which are before the throne.* They certainly cannot be underſtood of any created ſpirits however exalted.

Theſe

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Theſe are limited in their faculties, and dependent upon God as well as we, and therefore how could they either hear or anſwer his requeſts? And if we believe the Son to be a divine perſon, it is very unnatural to ſuppoſe that a ſet of beings, which are only mere creatures, ſhould intervene between the Father and him in this prayer for all the variety of bleſſings, which all the varied ſituations and characters of every individual belonging to thoſe churches might ſtand in need of. It is much more ſuitable to the true Chriſtian doctrine upon this important point, as well as to the manner of the apoſtles in ſuch ſalutations, to underſtand the expreſſions as denoting the divine all-perfect Spirit himſelf. It has often been obſerved that *ſeven* was a number of perfection among the Jews, and therefore

therefore it would be well underſtood to expreſs the ſenſe which is now aſſigned to it; his being *before the throne of God*, may be conſidered as denoting his conſtant readineſs to execute his office.

The apoſtle concludes his ſalutation, by praying for grace and peace to them, as from the Faher and the all-perfect Spirit alike, ſo alſo———*from Jeſus Chriſt, the faithful witneſs, the firſt begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.* Theſe unqueſtionably are characters peculiar to Chriſt. But how is he to be underſtood as the *faithful witneſs*, in contradiſtinction to all the prophets who have witneſſed in the name of God? Did not they bear faithful teſtimony in the truths which they delivered? It muſt be acknowledged that they did. Yet our Lord Jeſus is called,

by

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by way of diſtinction and eminence, *The Faithful Witneſs*, and well does he merit this appellation. He teſtifies concerning God in a manner far ſuperior to them: *For no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son ſhall reveal him.* Therefore we find him ſaying to Nicodemus, *We ſpeak that we do know, and teſtify that we have ſeen; for no man hath aſcended up into heaven but the Son of man, who is in heaven.* Hence his teſtimony is incomparably beyond that of the ancient prophets, who often did not underſtand the things which they teſtified: whereas our Lord was intimately acquainted with all the truths which he delivered, and was able to explain the reaſons upon which they ſtood.

With reſpect to the nature of of the teſtimony which he bore, it muſt have carried a conviction along

along with it beyond that of any other teſtimony. He not only maintained it with firmneſs, and ſealed it with his blood; but he did what no other witneſs ever did, or could do: He reſted the great ſtrength of his teſtimony, not even upon his death, but upon his reſurrection from the dead; and he plainly intimated, that if he did not riſe again his teſtimony was not true.

Therefore the apoſtle immediately takes notice of this circumſtance, and ſpeaks of him as *the firſt begotten from the dead.* But he ſeems to employ it particularly for the comfort of his diſciples, conſidering his reſurrection as the firſt fruits, and therefore the pledge and earneſt of their future reſurrection.

It is altogether unneceſſary here to enter into any argument about thoſe

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thoſe who were raiſed from the dead prior to our Lord's reſurrection, as if this invalidated what is here aſſerted; for every attentive reader muſt obſerve, that it is only in the view of his riſing as a public perſon, that he is here ſpoken of. His riſing, as the head of a body, which was afterwards to be raiſed in its order, and of which his reſurrection was the pledge. Any reſurrection, therefore, of private perſons that might have taken place before his, in whatever way it might be accounted for, cannot affect this great and leading principle. Inſtances of this kind could be no pledge of the reſurrection of others, as his reſurrection was. And therefore, as he is the only perſon that has riſen in a public character, as the head of a great body that was to follow, he is ſtyled, with great propriety

priety and truth, *the firſt begotten from the dead*, juſt as Paul ſtyles him, in the ſame verſe, *the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*. CHAP. I.

The laſt character under which he is here deſcribed, is that of *the Prince of the kings of the earth*. This may be underſtood as ſignificantly inſinuating his univerſal and ſupreme dominion. But we ſhould perceive its particular intent and energy ſtill better, did we conſider it as denoting his abſolute power over all earthly potentates, which the original word * properly ſignifies, and under it *the ruler of the kings of the earth*.

How admirably adapted are theſe titles to the inſtruction and comfort of the ſaints! while the apoſtle prays for bleſſings to them from above, he exhibits the Father in the eternity and unchangeableneſs of

* αρχων.

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his majeſty;—the all-perfect Spirit, in his gracious and conſtant agency; and the divine Redeemer as the revealer and teſtifier of the ways of God to men; as the ſure witneſs, or martyr, who confirmed his doctrine, not only by his death, but by ſhewing that death had no power over him: who roſe triumphant from the grave, and now reigns in glory in the heavens, ordering all things for his people's good. What ſentiments of hope and confidence and joy, are theſe proſpects of the divine nature fitted to inſpire! The apoſtle ſeems to have felt all the ardour of adoring gratitude, in contemplating the wonders of that grace which he was now imploring for the ſaints, and therefore he breaks forth into this animated ſong of praiſe:

——*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.*

The immediate object of this doxology is the Redeemer himſelf, the great diſpenſer of divine beneficence to men. It was he *that loved us*, and that loved us to ſuch an amazing degree as even to lay down his life for us. He poured out his precious blood to cleanſe our ſouls from guilt, and thereby to prevent us from ſinking down into perdition. Not only ſo, he has likewiſe raiſed us to the higheſt honours, combining in our character all that was ever reckoned great and venerable upon the earth, making us *kings and prieſts unto God*; giving us

near

CHAP. near access to God, even in this world, and quickening us together with himself, and raising us up, and making us to sit together with him in the heavenly places. To him this enraptured apostle ascribes *glory and dominion for ever, and ever.*---Another plain act of worship addressed Christ, and therefore a confirming evidence of his divine character and Godhead.

This glory of his shall soon be made manifest. For,

Ver. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.*

Christ's coming in clouds, in the language of scripture, signifies his coming in the glory of his power.

In

In this manner he ſhall certainly come at the end of this world. Then indeed *every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo who pierced him.* But it cannot be ſaid, in the proper meaning of language, that *all the kindreds*, or tribes, *of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of him* (a). For though this ſhall be a day of horror and lamentation to the wicked, it ſhall be a day of gladneſs

(a) I know, that in the prophecies of this book, the earth is ſometimes put for the world, in contradiſtinction to the church, and that the inhabitants of the earth are put for the ungodly and wicked, upon whom the woes of divine judgement were to fall. And I ſhould reckon it a juſt and ſatisfying interpretation of the expreſſion here, to underſtand it in this manner, had the apoſtle begun to open any of thoſe ſcenes in which the church and the world are diſtinguiſhed from one another, under the notion of an heavenly and an earthly ſtate. But nothing of this kind being as yet introduced, it appears too unnatural and violent for an enquiring mind to acquieſce in.

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neſs and triumph to the righteous. But there are other ſtrong reaſons to induce us to underſtand the coming of Chriſt, in this paſſage, not ſo properly of his laſt magnificent appearance, as of his coming by the diſplay of his ſupreme dominion, and of his ſovereign grace, in the various diſpoſitions of providence which are afterwards unfolded. There he evidently ſtands forth as the protector of his church, againſt all the power and policy of this world, and ſhews that in him the ancient prediction is accompliſhed, *Rule thou in the midſt of thine enemies.* There he appears as the juſtifier of his people's cauſe, in taking vengeance on their moſt haughty perſecutors; firſt, in the deſtruction of Rome heathen, afterwards in the deſtruction of Rome antichriſtian; and of the Turkiſh empire,

that

that wide extended tyranny, which has ſo long obſtructed the progreſs of Chriſtianity, and diſcovered the moſt contemptuous and virulent enmity againſt it. At length he appears in the glory of his ſpiritual conqueſt, bringing all the nations in ſubjection under him. Then it may be ſaid with great propriety, in the language of this prophecy, that *every eye ſhall ſee him*, and ſeeing him ſhall ſubmit unto him, *and* (even) *they alſo which pierced him;* for then his ancient people, penetrated with a ſenſe of their attrocious guilt, and of the juſt and exemplary puniſhment under which they have ſo long been lying, ſhall return unto him again.—They ſhall return, according to the ancient patterns of repentance, with *weeping and lamentation, and mourning:* and thus *all kindreds of the earth*, or rather, as

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as the words more properly ſignify, all the tribes of the land, meaning the whole of the tribes of Iſrael, wherever they are ſcattered abroad over the face of the earth, *ſhall wail becauſe of him* (a).

Of

(a) This paſſage has more difficulty in it than moſt perſons, at firſt ſight, would imagine. It has been generally underſtood of what is called the ſecond coming of Chriſt: But commentators ſeem all to have been conſcious that it was ſomewhat unnatural for the apoſtle to ſeize upon the extremity at once, and to uſher in a long and complicated ſeries of predictions with the laſt appearance of Chriſt upon the earth, and ſtill more to ſpeak of this as if it were not at any great diſtance. Therefore thoſe who have gone into this opinion, endeavour to account for the apparent improbability, from the practice which is obſerved in human compoſitions, in ſometimes placing the ultimate object to which they refer in their very front, not conſidering that a perſon under the influence of prophetic inſpiration cannot be ſuppoſed to attend to the rules of human art.

Others

Of this coming of Chriſt in a glorious manner, in the courſe of theſe prophecies, the apoſtle brings

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Others again have been ſo much ſtruck with the alluſion to a paſſage in ancient prophecy, that they have underſtood this coming of Chriſt entirely of the converſion of the Jews, and thereby have given it a ſenſe as unnatural as the former. The alluſion to Zachariah's prophecy of that grand event, is indeed too evident to paſs unnoticed. The prophet ſays, *they ſhall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him.* The apoſtle ſays, *they who pierced him ſhall ſee him.* He adds, in the very expreſſions of our Lord, which probably glance at the ſame object, *and all the tribes of the earth*, or of the land, *ſhall wail becauſe of him.* And when we conſider the extraordinary, and perhaps miraculous diſplay of the power and grace of the Redeemer that ſhall then take place, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed at his being repreſented as coming even in the clouds, upon that occaſion. But thoſe who reſtrict the coming of our Lord, which is here ſpoken of, ſolely to that event, can never give an adequate meaning to theſe expreſſions, *and every eye ſhall*

ſee

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an elegant proof, from the designations which he heard him assume. But we shall enter more easily into his

see him; besides the improbability of the apostle's singling out any one important event in this prophecy, and calling it the coming of Christ, while he passes by all the rest. But if we understand this passage, as I have above explained it, of Christ's coming in his glorious power, by the accomplishment of those various revolutions of providence, which are afterwards predicted, every circumstance will appear natural and easy; and though we cannot suppose that the all-inspiring Spirit of God is guided by the rules of human composition, yet we see a peculiar propriety and beauty in his directing the apostle to insert in the very introduction to these prophecies, this declaration of the all-disposing agency of Christ, which was to be illustriously displayed in a variety of instances in the events to which they referred.

I cannot forbear adding to this note, though already too long, that when we speak of the recovery of God's ancient people, we must not restrict the meaning to those who are properly called Jews, but must extend it to the whole of the tribes of

his meaning, if we take the laſt two words of this verſe, and make them the beginning of the next, rendering

of Iſrael. Theſe, we have every reaſon to believe, from the ancient prophecies, ſhall be recovered as well as the other.

What can we make of the following prophecies, unleſs we underſtand them in this extenſive import, Iſaiah xi. 11, 12. *And it ſhall come to paſs in that day, that the Lord ſhall ſet his hand again the ſecond time to recover the remnant of his people which ſhall be left, from Aſſyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cuſh, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the iſlands of the ſea. And he ſhall ſet up an enſign for the nations, and ſhall aſſemble the outcaſts of Iſrael, and gather together the diſperſed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.* Jer. xxxiii. 7. *And I will cauſe the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Iſrael to return, and will build them as at the firſt.* Hoſea i. 11. *Then ſhall the children of Judah, and the children of Iſrael, be gathered together, and appoint themſelves one head, and they ſhall come up out of the land: for great ſhall be the day of Jezreel.*

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rendering them according to their import, in the following manner.

Ver. 8. *Yes, verily, (for) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,*

reel. It may be ſaid indeed, that the deſcription may be a hyperbolical way of expreſſing the honour and dignity to which the Jewiſh people ſhall ſtill be raiſed, by a compariſon with the times of their higheſt proſperity of old. But what authority has any perſon for ſuch an interpretation? Nothing can be more certain than that we have the very ſame ground for expecting the reſtoration of the ancient Iſraelites as of the Jews. It is declared as plainly as the other, and indeed in language of the very ſame import; and as they cannot with any plauſibility be ſuppoſed to have returned with the Jews from their captivity, which ſome have imagined *, we muſt look for this event at a period as yet to come. Is it not ſtrange then that this part of the prophecy ſhould be ſo little thought of, the attention of Chriſtians being almoſt entirely confined to the other? It is not

* See Whitaker's hiſtory of Arianiſm.

ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. CHAP. I.

Theſe words expreſs ſo ſtrongly the eternal power and Godhead of the Redeemer, that there is no evading their force, but by proving, what no perſon has yet been able to do, that they are ſpoken, not by the Son, but by the Father. The manner in which they are introduced,

not eaſy to account for this, except upon the principle that this people are probably long ſince ſunk among the nations, and therefore that it would be an uſeleſs miracle to diſtinguiſh them, as this could not admit of any evidence. Upon the ſame principle, the reſurrection of the body has been controverted, as a miracle to no purpoſe, becauſe any other body would do as well. But we cannot be guilty of a higher degree of preſumption, than when we pretend to interpret what God has declared, not of what he has ſaid he will do, but of what we think proper for him to do.

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duced, affords the higheſt probability, that they were ſpoken by the Son. The declaration which they contain, conſiſts of two parts, which I conceive have a very different meaning and object. The firſt is a proverbial phraſe, *I am Alphà and Omega* (a), which is immediately explained by the following words, *the beginning and the ending*. This is not to be underſtood of the eternity and unchangeableneſs of our Lord's exiſtence, for then the expreſſions, *which is*, *and which was*, *and which is to come*, would be a mere repetition without the leaſt additional meaning. But it is to be underſtood of his pledging himſelf as the divine accompliſher of the whole ſeries of the prophecies of this book from beginning

(a) The firſt and the laſt letters of the Greeks.

beginning to end (b); and, as the ſecurity for this could only reſt upon the unchangeable eternity and omnipotence of his nature, therefore it is ſubjoined, *ſaith the Lord*; *which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*, aſcribing in the cleareſt and moſt energetic language, theſe incommunicable perfections to

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(b) This is agreeable to the manner in which the Jews employed this proverbial phraſe. So far from its being conſidered as a neceſſary expreſſion of eternity, we find them applying it to the beginning and ending of the law of God. Thus, Lightfoot quotes ſeveral paſſages from the writings of their Rabbies—where they ſay, "Abraham "and Sarah performed all the law from Aleph to "Thaw." And again, "He that walks in inte-"grity, is as if he performed all the law from "Aleph to Thaw." And as I conceive that almoſt the whole of this book is a tranſlation by the apoſtle himſelf, I have no doubt that this proverbial declaration, in the form in which he received it, would run in the common Hebrew terms.

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to himſelf, and thereby giving the ſtrongeſt poſſible aſſurance that all his predictions ſhall be moſt certainly fulfilled.

Ver. 9. *I John, who alſo am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus Chriſt, was in the iſle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt.*

There is ſcarcely any thing in this verſe that requires interpretation. It may be proper, however, to give ſome account of the occaſion and circumſtances of the apoſtle's baniſhment. In the year 95 the Emperor Domitian began to perſecute the church of Chriſt. Among thoſe who ſuffered in that fiery trial was this venerable man, whom his maſter had ſo highly honoured,

noured, and who was now far advanced in labours and in years. He was charged with ſedition, the very name of which excites the jealouſy of tyrants: and what was the ſedition of which he was guilty? Had he diſturbed the order of ſociety? No. Had he relaxed the obligations of ſubjects to their rulers? No. He had only preached the glad tidings of the goſpel of peace. But to ſhake the imperial ſuperſtition by this novel doctrine was at that time reckoned ſedition. The apoſtle therefore was found guilty, and condemned. The frequent puniſhment that was then inflicted for this crime, was baniſhment. Small and deſert iſlands, or at leaſt thoſe that were very poorly inhabited, were commonly choſen as the places for inflicting the ſentence. Patmos anſwered to this deſcription in both

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thoſe reſpects (a). Thither therefore was John baniſhed *for the word of God, and for the teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt*, and there he received thoſe magnificent viſions which are the ſubject of this book. On the detail of

(a) This iſland, now known by the name of Palmoſa, was anciently ſuppoſed to be about thirty miles in circumference, but modern geographers have reduced it to a much narrower compaſs. It lies off the coaſt of Aſia, in the Ægean ſea, about thirty miles from Miletus. Its ſurface is mountainous, and its ſoil is rocky and barren. Bochart obſerves, that in the Arabic paraphraſe, it is written *Batmos*, and thinks it derived this appellation from its producing the turpentine tree (terebenthus) which both in the Syriac and Chaldee is called nearly by the ſame name. This agrees well with the nature of the country, for Haſſelqueſt found this tree growing wild upon the rocks of Mount Tabor. In this iſland, legend has preſerved the houſe in which St. John lived, which the inhabitants call the Apocalypſe.

of the introductory one he immediately enters, when he ſays,

Ver. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.*

To be *in the Spirit*, here, ſignifies to be thrown into an extaſy by the miraculous energy of the Holy Spirit. By the *Lord's day*, is evidently to be underſtood, the day which Chriſtians have kept ſacred in honour of their Divine Maſter ever ſince his reſurrection from the dead; and *a great voice, as of a trumpet*, denotes, a voice very ſtrong and ſolemn, and awful (b). This voice ſpake unto him,

Ver.

(b) I take the words to ſignify properly, *a voice as of a great trumpet*, intimating, that it could be compared to no ordinary trumpet, and perhaps alluding

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Ver. 11. *Saying I am Alpha and Omega, the firſt and the laſt,* (words which have been already explained) *and what thou ſeeſt* (c), *write in a book, and ſend it*

alluding to the great trumpet, the ſignal of the divine preſence at the giving of the law. See Exod. xix.

(c) *What thou ſeeſt*, muſt be underſtood as ſignifying *what thou ſhalt ſee;* for as yet he had ſeen nothing. It is a ſtrange notion which has been entertained by ſome, that John ſaw all the viſions of this book in one day. This will appear quite incredible, when we conſider that he muſt then have written them all on the ſame day likewiſe; for we learn, from chap. x. 4. that it was his practice to write each viſion immediately after he beheld it. Add to this, not only the time which muſt have been ſpent in contemplating thoſe viſions, but the time which it muſt have taken to explain them to him——the time which muſt have paſſed while he was *eating* the little book; that is to ſay, meditating upon its contents, and digeſting them in his thoughts; and finally, that the apoſtle was then advanced to an extreme old age;

it unto the ſeven churches which are in Aſia; unto Epheſus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Ver. 12. *And I turned to ſee the voice that ſpake with me; and, being turned, I ſaw ſeven golden candleſticks.*

Theſe are afterwards explained by our Lord himſelf, as ſignifying churches; and what can be a fitter emblem of the illumination and fervour of a ſociety of Chriſtians than a burning lamp!

Ver. 13. *And, in the midſt of the ſeven candleſticks,*

age; that he wrote in a foreign language, and wrote probably in capitals, as is the caſe in the earlieſt manuſcripts which have come down to us, and we ſhall plainly perceive that, without a miracle, for which there is no reaſon, all this variety of employment muſt have required a much longer period.

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candleſticks, ONE *like unto the ſon of man*, &c.

This deſcription is altogether of a myſtical nature; and though the apoſtle only ſpeaks of him as *one like unto a Son of man*, intimating, that his appearance was in human form; yet it is evident that he at length underſtood him to be the Son of God. The manner of his dreſs unites in it the dignity both of prieſt and king. *His head and his hair;* or, in proper Engliſh, *the hair of his head being white as wool, as white as ſnow*, repreſents him in the venerable character of age, the emblem of wiſdom. *His eyes being as a flame of fire*, denotes his all-penetrating diſcernment. *His feet being like pure braſs, as if they burned in a furnace*, ſignifies the purity and firmneſs of his conduct. And *his voice being like the ſound of many waters*,

waters, to any one who has ever had occaſion to obſerve the awful roaring which the ocean ſometimes makes upon the ſhore, will recal an idea at once highly majeſtic and ſublime. *His having in his right hand ſeven ſtars*, intimates, the ſupport and direction which he affords to his faithful miniſters. *The two-edged ſword, which went out of his mouth*, is the emblem of his vengeance. *And his countenance as the ſun ſhining in his ſtrength*, as it does not require, ſo it abſolutely annihilates all illuſtration.

The apoſtle next informs us of the effect of this magnificent viſion upon himſelf, and of the condeſcenſion and grace of his Almighty Lord, which he then experienced.

Ver. 17. *And when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand*

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hand upon me, ſaying, Fear not; I am the firſt and the laſt, (the great conductor of the affairs of my church and people:)

Ver. 18. *Even the living Being* himſelf; (this is the exact rendering of the words: our tranſlation infinitely diminiſhes the ſenſe:) *And I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.* (Intimating, that his prieſthood was unchangeable; and therefore, as St. Paul had ſtrongly argued, he was able to ſave to the very end of time, at leaſt till he ſhould deliver his church out of all her troubles). Upon hearing this reviving truth, the apoſtle was filled with ardour, and could not refrain expreſſing his cordial acquieſcence, by interpoſing his *amen.* When the Saviour again proceeds——*and have the keys of hell and of death.* That is

to

to ſay, have abſolute authority over death and his dark domains: or, perhaps the meaning may be more ſimply, and at the ſame time more accurately expreſſed, by underſtanding hell and death, as ſignifying, the deadly priſon of the grave, of which the keys were in his hand; intimating, that none ſhould go down into it, or fall under its power, without his orders; and that none could be detained in it when he ſhould command their releaſe (a).

N Here

(a) No ſatisfying evidence has yet been brought to ſhew that *hades*, here, and in other places, rendered *hell*, ever ſignifies in the New Teſtament the ſtate of ſeparate ſpirits at large. It is moſt commonly uſed to ſignify the grave. We have every reaſon to believe that this is the ſenſe of it here, and that the expreſſions *hades* and *death*, according to the Hebrew idiom, denote properly the deadly *hades* or the *grave*. This is repreſent-

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Here he ſeems particularly to comfort his fainting apoſtle, by making him to underſtand that he has power to ſupport the imbecility of nature, even when apparently ſinking down into the grave; and that none of his diſciples need to feel any apprehenſions, even upon entering into its gloomy manſions. There they can receive no injury, and they ſhall be raiſed up to endleſs joy.

Thus, wonderfully reſtored by the power and grace of his Divine Maſter, the apoſtle receives the following inſtruction from him.

Ver.

ed under the notion of a priſon, or ſtrong hold, of which our Lord has the keys, to ſhut up in it, or to preſerve from it, as he pleaſes. What a ſtriking proof is this of his ſovereign power, by which he is able both to ſave and to deſtroy.

Ver. 19. *Write the things which thou haſt ſeen, and the things which are, and the things which ſhall be hereafter.*

Ver. 20. *The myſtery of the ſeven ſtars, which thou ſaweſt in my right hand, and the ſeven golden candleſticks. The ſeven ſtars are the angels of the ſeven churches, and the ſeven candleſticks are the ſeven churches.*

It is matter of ſome difficulty to interpret theſe apparently plain and ſimple words. If we underſtand them as an injunction to the apoſtle reſpecting the whole of the revelations contained in this book, then the meaning will be, give an account, in writing, of the viſion which thou haſt beheld; likewiſe of the preſent ſtate of the Aſiatic churches, as I ſhall deſcribe it, and of

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of the diſcoveries relating to future times which I ſhall reveal. But I ſtrongly ſuſpect, from what is ſaid in the 20th verſe, that this is not the true interpretation. The terms in which this injunction is conveyed, ſeem to reſtrict it to what the apoſtle had already beheld. *Write*, ſays the exalted Saviour, *the things which thou haſt ſeen*, EVEN *the things which are, and the things which ſhall be after theſe, the myſtery of the ſeven ſtars, and of the ſeven golden candleſticks;* intimating, one ſhould think, very plainly, that theſe ſtars and candleſticks, in their myſtical import, reſpected both the things which then were, and the things which ſhould be after them. But it was neceſſary that their emblematical meaning ſhould likewiſe be ſpecified; therefore they are afterwards explained, as

as denoting ſeven goſpel miniſters and goſpel churches. CHAP. I.

This affords a ſtrong preſumption, independent of all other circumſtances, that the following epiſtles to thoſe miniſters and churches, not only deſcribe their character and ſtate at that time, but likewiſe that they have a prophetical aſpect, and are addreſſed to them, as types of ſimilar characters and conditions of the church in after ages.

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THE grand prophetical diſcoveries which it was the purpoſe of this book particularly to deſcribe, were exhibited to the eye of this wondering apoſtle, upon a very ſublime and magnificent theatre. Thither he is careful to conduct his reader, before he enters upon the intereſting detail. This is an excellent preparative to the ſtudy of theſe prophecies. The aſtoniſhing magnificence of the ſcene arreſts the attention, and wraps up the ſoul in the moſt elevated contemplation. The awful ſolemnity with which the opening of the book of theſe prophecies was accompanied, fixes down upon

upon the mind a ſenſe of their vaſt importance; and the glory of the heavenly world, which is there ſo ſtrikingly diſplayed, will ſupport and animate the ſerious enquirer while he traces the various and difficult ſteps of the church in her progreſs to that exalted ſtate. This chapter, and the following, are wholly taken up in theſe ſublime deſcriptions. And though they are carried on with great ſimplicity and exactneſs, the apoſtle telling us what he ſaw and heard, perhaps as clearly as words could expreſs; yet, as might well be expected upon ſuch a ſubject, we ſhall find it ſometimes hard to underſtand his meaning.

Ver. 1. *After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the firſt voice which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which ſaid, Come up*

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up hither, and I will ſhew thee things which muſt be hereafter.

He here intimates, that another magnificent viſion was about to be exhibited to his view, after the tranſactions reſpecting the former were finiſhed; but whether immediately, or at ſome diſtance of time, he gives us no ground to determine. He informs us, that *as he looked;* probably, while he was devoutly muſing, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, he ſaw a ſtrange and wonderful ſight. He beheld, as if an entry was opened into heaven, the ethereal vault appearing to be rent, or ſeparated, in ſuch a manner as that he could penetrate a little into the glory that was within. It is likewiſe not improbable, that it appeared lowered upon that occaſion; or, in the beautiful language of ſcripture,

ſcripture, that the heavens were *bowed*, or bended downwards, that ſo he might more eaſily hear the voice which ſpake to him, and obey its direction in going up thither. He does not ſeem as yet to have beheld any of the heavenly beings. But he heard the voice of his Divine Maſter (a), ſaying, *Come up*

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(a) I have ſaid, that this was the voice of his Divine Maſter; and I think myſelf warranted in this by the apoſtle's words, though it does not appear in our Bibles. Our tranſlators have well ſupplied ην before 'ηνεωγμενη in the former part of the verſe, which, by the ſame analogy, ought to be ſupplied before λεγουσα in the latter, thus και 'η φωνη 'η πρωτη 'ην ηκουσα ως σαλπιγγος λαλουσης μετ' εμου (ην) λεγουσα the exact rendering of which is: And the firſt voice which I heard, as of a trumpet, talking with me, ſaid; and can it be doubted, that by the firſt voice, which he heard, he here refers to the voice which he heard in the firſt viſion, and which he deſcribes as a great voice of a trumpet. This voice he well knew again, when it was now expected, and therefore he ſhews no anxiety to diſcover whoſe voice it was, as he formerly did.

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up hither, and I will ſhew thee things which muſt be hereafter; denoting, that this was to be the general ſcene of thoſe prophetical viſions which he was afterwards to behold.

Ver. 2. *And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold a throne was ſet in heaven, and one ſat on the throne.*

Ver. 3. *And he that ſat, was to look upon, like a jaſper, and a ſardine ſtone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in ſight like unto an emerald.*

To be in the Spirit, denotes, as was formerly obſerved, to be wrapt up in a ſpiritual extacy, and to perceive ſublime and heavenly viſions (b). This was certainly the caſe

(b) When the apoſtle tells us again, that he was in the Spirit, are we not led to conceive that there was ſome conſiderable interval between this and the former viſion, in which he was not in the Spirit,

caſe with the apoſtle upon this occaſion, when he felt himſelf inſtantly tranſlated to heaven, and both ſaw and heard thoſe wonderful things which he goes on to relate. The firſt object that engages his aſtoniſhed contemplation was a ſplendid and glorious throne, which he beheld in heaven, and Jehovah himſelf repreſented as ſeated upon it, not by any bodily appearance, or ſhape, but by ſignificant and ſtriking emblems. He was to look upon *like a jaſper, and a ſardine ſtone;* the one, by its mild and placid aſpect, fitly denoting his clemency and mercy; the other, by its bright and fiery ſplendour, repreſenting his holineſs and juſtice. The very circumſtance

Spirit, but left to his ordinary perceptions? This circumſtance increaſes the improbability of their interpretation who think that this revelation was all given in one day.

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circumſtance of his being ſeated upon the heavenly throne was ſymbolical of the ſovereignty of his power; while the figure of a rainbow encircling the throne, chiefly made up of a beautiful and ſhining green, like that of the emerald, was ſtrongly expreſſive of his faithfulneſs. How naturally may we ſuppoſe the language of the holy Pſalmiſt to come into the apoſtle's mind upon this occaſion: *O! Lord God of Hoſts, who is a ſtrong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulneſs round about thee? Juſtice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face* (a).

But

(a) It is not a little ſurpriſing, that Mr. Lowman ſhould reject as fanciful the emblematical interpretation of this deſcription; eſpecially, when we find him, at the ſame time, adopting its leading import. He ſeems to have thought with Vitringa, and others, that the apoſtle beheld the appearance ſeated upon

the

But while he was devoutly surveying this magnificent display of the glory of Jehovah, his attention was turned to a variety of different appearances, which tended greatly to elevate his mind, and gave vast solemnity to the scene. Let us follow

the throne; but it is certain that there is not the most distant intimation of this in the whole of the description. The evident similarity of this vision, to that of the throne of God which Ezekiel saw, where the figure of a man was beheld, is too loose a foundation for supporting this opinion. There is strong reason to believe, that the person who is there represented, is he who was afterwards to appear as the Son of man. But the person who is represented here, must be understood to be the Father; and therefore it was fit that the spirituality of the divine nature should not be confounded with the appearance of any bodily shape. Emblematical colours, and figures, and appearances then, are all that we have to go upon in forming that conception of the divine majesty which is here certainly intended to be conveyed.

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low him in his ſimple and admirable deſcription.

Ver. 4. *And round about the throne were four and twenty ſeats; and upon the ſeats I ſaw four and twenty elders ſitting, cloathed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

It is matter of much enquiry, who theſe four and twenty elders were, that were ſeated about the the throne, each on a ſeat, or little throne, apart by himſelf. This I have already endeavoured to inveſtigate in a ſeparate diſſertation; I ſhall only here obſerve, that they muſt have been perſons of high diſtinction in the church, as they had ſuch an honourable ſtation aſſigned them about the throne. Their white raiment is a mark of their acceptance and triumph; and

and the golden crowns upon their heads, are expreſſive of the dignity and glory to which they are raiſed. CHAP. IV.

Ver. 5. *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices,*——

Theſe awful appearances were the frequent attendants of any glorious diſplay of the divine preſence and majeſty in ancient times. The giving of the law has been commonly mentioned as an inſtance of this, and the ſublime deſcription of the divine preſence by David, in the xviiith pſalm; by Iſaiah, chap. lxiv; by Micah, chap. i; and by Habakkuk, chap. iii; are all inſtances of the ſame kind. But what is more preciſely to our preſent purpoſe

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poſe, when Iſaiah beheld the Lord ſitting upon his throne, and his train filling the temple, the viſion was accompanied with awful appearances of a ſimilar nature; voices were heard; the poſts of the door were moved at them; and the houſe was filled with ſmoke *. In all theſe inſtances, the character of God is diſplayed as the judge and ruler of his people, and as taking vengeance on his enemies. The ſame thing, no doubt, is intended here: and it was fit that the divine majeſty ſhould be exhibited in this tremendous view upon the delivery of a train of prophecies, predicting miſery and deſtruction upon the wicked.

—*and*

* Iſaiah vi.

—and there were ſeven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the ſeven ſpirits of God.

Ver. 6. *And before the throne, there was a ſea of glaſs, like unto chryſtal—*

The alluſion, in this viſion, to the ſacred things in the ancient temple at Jeruſalem, is ſo very obvious, that it has been taken notice of by almoſt all expoſitors. Here we are taught to ſpiritualize its furniture. What can be more pure, and active, and penetrating, than a flame of fire? And when we contemplate this in its ſeven fold, that is to ſay, its perfect radiance, how apt and lively the image which it ſupplies of the illumination, and power, and agency of the ſeven Spirits; or, as the meaning certainly is, of the all-perfect Spirit of God, denoted here, in like man-

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ner as in the firſt chapter, by this number of perfection. He is repreſented in this viſion before the throne, for the reaſon that was there aſſigned, to denote his conſtant readineſs to execute his office in behalf of his church and people.

With reſpect to the ſea of glaſs, like unto chryſtal, which the apoſtle ſaw before the throne, there can be little doubt that it was introduced, in alluſion to the brazen laver in the temple (a); and it is a high indication of that purity and ſanctity of character, which is neceſſary in making a near and ſolemn approach unto God. This ſeems more natural than to underſtand it as expreſſive of the atoning blood of Chriſt, which is particularly ſet forth in a ſubſequent part of the viſion,

(a) Solomon made a molten Sea, 1 Kings vii. 23.

vision, by the emblem of a Lamb that was slain. CHAP. IV.

—*and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

Ver. 7. *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face like a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.*

Ver. 8. *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and* THEY WERE *full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come* *.

Ver. 9. *And when those beasts give glory and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever*:——

This

* For the meaning of these verses, see Dissertation II.

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This aſcription of glory and honour, and thanks, muſt be different from the other act of worſhip, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. The former they are repreſented as continually engaged in: this belongs only to particular occaſions; namely, the great evolutions of providence reſpecting the church on earth. In theſe the elders are eſpecially and deeply intereſted, and therefore they are with great propriety introduced upon theſe occaſions as in the two following verſes:

Ver. 10. *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that ſat on the throne, and worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever. and caſt their crowns before the throne, ſaying,*

Ver. 11. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for*

for thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure they are and were created. CHAP. IV.

Here God is repreſented as the great proprietor of all things, by whom they were brought into being, and for whoſe glory they were made; and from this aſcription of glory and honour and power to him, we may reaſonably conclude, that it refers to ſome great interpoſitions of his ſovereign dominion, for the deſtruction of his enemies, and the ſafety and proſperity of his church on earth.

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Ver. 1. *And I ſaw in the right hand of him that ſat on the throne, a book, written within and on the backſide, ſealed with ſeven ſeals.*

This is the viſion which ſtands immediately connected with the developement of the myſteries of providence, which the apoſtle afterwards deſcribes. The book which he ſaw was the book of providence, containing the grand events that were to take place reſpecting the church, and ſome of her greateſt enemies, from the days of the apoſtle to the end of time. It was full of important matter, therefore it is ſaid to have been *written within,*

within, and on the backſide. In order to underſtand this, we muſt firſt be told that it was not in the form of modern books, but conſiſted of ſheets of parchment, rolled upon one another around a cylinder, and written upon both ſides (a), which was ſeldom done, except when the inſide could not hold all the writing: it was ſealed with (b) ſeven ſeals, at the opening of each of which, one entire part, full of emblematical repreſentation, ſeems to have

(a) Vitringa's reaſon for underſtanding the words in this verſe is quite unanſwerable; namely, that if the backſide here did not refer to the writing, but only to the ſealing of the book, it would not have been mentioned at all, becauſe there was no other place upon which it could be ſealed but on the backſide.

(b) Only one of theſe however appeared at a time. When the firſt was opened, and the part belonging to it rolled off, then the ſecond appeared, and ſo on to the laſt.

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have come off. This book was held in the right hand of him that ſat on the throne, intimating, that the knowledge of future events belongs only to God. But we ſee, from what follows, that he can communicate it to whom he pleaſes; but that it is only to objects of his peculiar favour to whom this privilege is granted. Therefore the apoſtle ſubjoins,

Ver. 2. *And I ſaw a ſtrong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to looſe the ſeals thereof.*

From the anſwer to this queſtion it appears, that ſuch were the diſcoveries which this book contained, that it required the higheſt character and merit to be permitted to take it out of the hand of him that ſat upon the throne, and to look upon it. Accordingly it is ſaid,

Ver.

Ver 3. *And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look therein.*

The word* tranſlated *no man*, ought to be rendered *no one*, meaning no creature in heaven; that is, no angel: nor in earth, that is, no man: nor under the earth; that is, no demon, or departed ſpirit; who have long been ſuppoſed to be poſſeſſed of ſuperior knowledge. None of theſe were permitted to open the book, or ſo much as to look upon it.

This filled the apoſtle with great anxiety and grief, as he informs us,

Ver. 4. *And I wept much becauſe no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*

* ουδεις

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But his ſorrow was ſoon relieved by one of the elders, who ſaid unto him,

Ver. 5.—*weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof.*

There can be no doubt that the perſon here meant is the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But the myſtical deſcription requires to be explained. He is called *the Lion of the tribe of Juda*, as commentators have well obſerved, in reference to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 9. who ſpeaks of Judah under the emblem of a lion's whelp, chiefly on account of this great and mighty one, who was to riſe out of that tribe: and he is called the *Root of David*, as he is David's Creator and Lord, at the ſame time that

that he ſprang from his family, according to the fleſh. The intimation, that he had prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof, while it filled the apoſtle with joy, rouſed his attention to diſcover, if poſſible, this wonderful perſon. This he intimates in the following words:

Ver. 6. *And I beheld, and lo, in the midſt of the throne, and of the four beaſts, and in the midſt of the elders, ſtood a Lamb, as it had been ſlain, having ſeven horns, and ſeven eyes, which are the ſeven Spirits of God ſent forth into all the earth.*

Nothing can be more evident than that the four beaſts are here repreſented as very near the throne, and nearer, indeed, than either the elders or any of the other beings that are mentioned. It is quite neceſſary

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ceſſary ſo to underſtand the paſſage, otherwiſe it would give no determinate deſcription of the place in which the Lamb was beheld, which it certainly was intended to do. This entirely overthrows the interpretation of Mr. Mede, who places them at a diſtance from the throne, towards the oppoſite quarters of the world. The apoſtle, then, beheld this myſtical perſon, as it were, in the midſt of the throne, which muſt have been tranſparent, and hence become a throne of mercy and of grace; he carried the marks of his propitiatory ſacrifice along with him, in appearing *as if he had been ſlain.* He appeared likewiſe, *having ſeven horns*, the emblem of ſupreme authority and power; and *ſeven eyes*, denoting, his having the all-perfect Spirit of God. Need we wonder then that he *prevailed to open the*

the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. His supreme dignity and excellency made him worthy to do it, and by his possessing the all-perfect Spirit of God, he was completely qualified to be the interpreter of the counsels of God to his church and people. This Spirit is further said to be *sent forth into all the earth;* intimating, that Christ, in whom he dwells, manages, by his influence, all the concerns of his church in every part of the world. This wonderful person the apostle beheld, 'till

Ver. 7.—*he came and took the book out of the hand of him that sat upon the throne.*

The Lamb's taking the book out of the hand of him that sat upon the throne, occasioned great exultation

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ultation and praiſe among the heavenly hoſts, as we learn from the following verſes.

Ver. 8. *And when he had taken the book, the four beaſts, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of ſaints.*

The learned reader, by looking into the original language, will eaſily perceive that it was only the four and twenty elders who had the harps, and golden vials full of odours, the term (εχοντες) agreeing only with them, and not with (ζωα) the beaſts, who therefore ought not to be underſtood to join in the following ſong, any farther than by their devout and cordial amen. The elders, however,

Ver.

Ver. 9. —*ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof; for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*;

Ver. 10. *And haſt made us unto our God, kings and prieſts, and we ſhall reign on the earth.*

Theſe elders underſtood well the wonderful foundation on which the honours of the Lamb are raiſed; that they ariſe from the ignominy and ſufferings of his croſs. Therefore they ſaid, *for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and haſt made us unto our God kings and prieſts, and we ſhall reign on the earth.* This *reign on the earth*, as I have already ſhewed, is to be underſtood of the future triumphs of

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of Chriſtianity in the world, when it ſhall bring all nations in ſubjection to it. This exalted ſong, however, did not reſt with them; it was taken up by a vaſt multitude of angels about the throne, as we learn from the following verſes.

Ver. 11. *I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beaſts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands,*

Ver. 12. *Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.*

Though the four beaſts and the elders are mentioned, (v. 11) yet they are not to be underſtood as joining in the ſong at preſent, but only the angels who were round about

bout the throne, and round about the beaſts and the elders, whoſe number was ſo great that it is deſcribed in a language denoting that they were innumerable; and though they could not apply the merits of this wonderful perſon to themſelves, yet they cheerfully paid him their juſt homage of adoration and praiſe. But the ſong at laſt became univerſal, and concluded with one grand aſcription of glory and praiſe, *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb,*

Ver. 13. *And every creature, which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

Who that reads this animated

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paſſage, and believes it to be the revealed word of God, can entertain a doubt of the true and proper divinity of the Lord Jeſus; here the plaineſt acts of adoration are paid to him that it is poſſible for words to expreſs. We ſee not only the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, but we ſee all the angels of God worſhipping him; and, as if it were meant on purpoſe to cut off the poor ſubterfuge of only inferior homage being paid to him, we ſee them paying their adorations equally, and in the very ſame expreſſions, *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.* In order to add the greater ſolemnity to this elevated ſcene, and to ſtrike the greater reverence and awe, the four beaſts, by themſelves, when the ſong was concluded, ſubjoined their *amen*; and likewiſe

wise the four and twenty elders performed a distinct act of worship, prostrating themselves before the throne. Thus we immediately read,

Ver. 14. *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SEALED BOOK.

I agree, in the general principle, with that claſs of expoſitors who underſtand the prophetical repreſentations which were exhibited at the opening of all the ſeals, except the laſt, as referring to the great events that took place in the Roman Empire, from the date of this prophecy till its fall and ruin. The poſterior date of this prophecy to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem being ſo well verified by the teſtimony of antiquity, excludes the interpretation of thoſe who underſtand them of the events which occurred

curred among the Jews, from the time of the aſcenſion of our Saviour, till the ſignal deſolation of that devoted people. And thoſe who underſtand them chiefly of the ſtate and circumſtances of the church in the latter times of the Roman Empire, deſtroy the conſiſtency of the repreſentations; being obliged, in ſome inſtances, to make them denote the church, in others, the ſtate. Beſides, from the difficulties they have to encounter, they are ſometimes reduced to the neceſſity of underſtanding even the interpretation of the figures in a myſtical ſenſe; not to ſpeak of the ſcanty evidence, which, in ſome caſes, is produced of their accompliſhment in the period of hiſtory to which they are referred. Difficulties no doubt will occur upon every

every ſcheme: but that ſcheme is certainly entitled to the beſt reception where the difficulties are leaſt, and where all the principal objects find an eaſy and an adequate illuſtration. This is the great principle which I have purſued in the following interpretation; with what ſucceſs muſt be left to others to determine.

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THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SEAL.

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Ver. 1. *And I ſaw, when the Lamb opened one of the ſeals, and I heard as it were the noiſe of thunder, one of the four beaſts, ſaying, Come, and ſee.*

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Ver. 2. *And I ſaw, and behold, a white horſe; and he that ſat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

We have ſeen already that the Lamb had taken the book out of the right hand of him that ſat on the throne.

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throne. Now he begins to open the ſeals of it. This book was in the ancient form of ſheets, or detached pieces, rolled one over the other. At the opening of each ſeal, one of theſe was unrolled, and its contents of conſequence diſplayed. What is ſaid to have been ſeen, muſt be underſtood to have been certain objects exhibited by painting, or ſome other means, upon theſe ſheets, without any writing except what might be neceſſary to explain the repreſentation: even this explanation may have been given in ſome other way.

Many commentators have thought that there is a meaning couched under the characters of *the beaſts*, as they are here called, or the *living creatures*, who give intimation of the opening of ſeveral of the ſeals. This opinion is harmleſs in

thoſe

thoſe who underſtand theſe creatures to ſignify miniſters of the goſpel, for it has no neceſſary effect upon the interpretation of the prophecy. But if they are underſtood to be the ſigns of the ſeveral quarters of the camp of the ancient Iſraelites, it limits the prophecy to particular circumſtances, and obliges us to look for the accompliſhment of the different repreſentations in that quarter to which the ſtandards reſpectively belonged. As I think both theſe opinions are without foundation, I reckon it improper to reſt any part of the interpretation upon them. The only ſure ground upon which we can proceed, is to look for thoſe events in hiſtory which come up to the full meaning of what is here repreſented.

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Theſe living creatures are probably to be underſtood as acting here in an official capacity. They ſeem appointed to call the attention of the apoſtle, and perhaps of the heavenly hoſts themſelves, to the wonders that were to be diſcloſed.

The firſt of them ſpoke with a voice like thunder, ſaying, *Come and ſee.* The apoſtle drew near, and he beheld, on the ſheet that was now opened or unrolled, the following ſtriking repreſentation, *a perſon riding on a white horſe. A bow was in his hand*, or upon his ſhoulder, which denoted that he was a warrior;—*a crown was given him*, intimating, that he was to be a mighty potentate;—the very colour of the horſe was expreſſive of triumph. And he went forth *conquering and to conquer* (a).

Interpreters

(a) It is remarkable, that this and the following repreſentations,

Interpreters have generally agreed in underſtanding this repreſentation to ſignify the conqueſts and triumph of the Saviour, in the propagation and progreſs of the goſpel, and in bringing the people in ſubjection under it. What has apparently given riſe to this interpretation is, the apparent ſimilarity of this deſcription to the prophecy of our Lord's ſpiritual victories in the xlvth pſalm. Yet, when attentively examined, there will be found very little ſimilarity between them; and there is evidently nothing in this deſcription that will not apply to any

repreſentations, ſeem to have been animated. We are led to conceive, from the manner of the deſcription, that the apoſtle ſaw ſome perſon putting a crown upon the head of this rider; that after this, the ſcene began to be in motion, and he appeared to ride forth in purſuit of the victories he was to obtain.

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any great prince, ſignalized by the extent of his dominion, and the glory of his conqueſts. If all the other ſeals, except the ſeventh, are to be underſtood as prophecies of the ſtate and circumſtances of the Roman empire, as I think, with great reaſon they have been, why ſhould not this be conſidered as referring to the ſame ſubject? To introduce the ſpiritual conqueſts of the Saviour, and to place them at the head of thoſe natural and political occurrences which were to affect the ſtate of the Roman empire for ſeveral ages, ſeems very unſuitable and inconſiſtent.

If therefore we would ſeek for the moſt probable interpretation, we muſt relinquiſh this the common one. Now let us conſider what was the ſtate of the Roman Empire at

at the commencement of this prophecy, and we ſhall diſcover a meaning which will be fully ſatisfying. It had grown great indeed, but it was far from having reached that vaſt magnitude and grandeur which it afterwards attained. This was reſerved for the atchievements of Trajan, who, from the rank of a general, was raiſed to the imperial throne. In him, therefore, I conceive, we find the character and the object which the prophecy reſpected; and to the repreſentation here exhibited the whole hiſtory of this prince remarkably correſponds.

He was trained up to arms from his early years, and, by a prudent conduct, joined to an active and intrepid ſpirit, he ſoon acquired a high degree of military fame. This anſwers to his being repreſented in prophecy under the figure of a warrior.

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warrior. He was a Spaniard by birth, and therefore could have no reaſonable expectation of the ſovereignty, as no foreigner had as yet ever been raiſed to the imperial throne. Even his family was far from being great; but his perſon is ſaid to have been ſtately, and his appearance dignified. On account of his uncommon abilities and merit, he was adopted by Nerva, and declared his partner and ſucceſſor in the empire. The penetration of Nerva, in making him the object of ſuch diſtinguiſhed confidence and honour, was amply demonſtrated by Trajan's after deportment. But it is preciſely to our purpoſe to obſerve the glory of his conqueſts, the vaſt acquiſitions which he added to the Roman empire, and the dread which he diffuſed of the Roman power, by which he over-awed the

ſurrounding

ſurrounding nations and reduced them to obedience. To theſe, contemporary hiſtorians bear ample teſtimony. But I cannot give the reader a more conciſe, or more ſtriking idea of them, than in the words of the celebrated author of the Hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire, however much I may diſagree with him in ſome reſpects.

" The firſt exploits of Trajan," ſays he " were againſt the Dacians, the moſt warlike of men, and who, during the reign of Domitian, had inſulted with impunity the majeſty of Rome. To the ſtrength and firmneſs of Barbarians, they added a contempt of life, which was derived from a warm perſuaſion of the immortality and tranſmigration of the ſoul. Decebalus, the Dacian king, approved himſelf a rival not unworthy

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unworthy of Trajan; nor did he deſpair of his own and the public fortune, till, by the confeſſion of his enemies, he had exhauſted every reſource both of valour and policy. This memorable war, with a very ſhort ſuſpenſion of hoſtilities, laſted five years; and as the Emperor could exert, without controul, the whole force of the ſtate, it was terminated by the abſolute ſubmiſſion of the Barbarians.

"Trajan was ambitious of fame, and the praiſes of Alexander, tranſmitted by a ſucceſſion of poets and hiſtorians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in his mind. Like him, the Roman Emperor undertook an expedition againſt the nations of the eaſt; but he lamented, with a ſigh, that his advanced age ſcarcely left him any hope of equalling the renown of the ſon of Philip. Yet the

the ſucceſs of Trajan, however tranſient, was rapid and ſpecious. The degenerate Parthians, broken by inteſtine diſcord, fled before his arms. He deſcended the river Tigris in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Perſian Gulph. He enjoyed the honour of being the firſt, as he was the laſt, of the Roman generals, who ever navigated that remote ſea. His fleets ravaged the coaſts of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himſelf that he was approaching towards the confines of India. Every day the aſtoniſhed Senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations, that acknowledged his ſway. They were informed that the kings of Boſphorus, Colchos, Iberia, Albania, Oſrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himſelf, had accepted their diadems from the hands of the Em-

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peror; that the independent tribes of the Median and Carduchian hills had implored his protection, and that the rich countries of Armenia, Meſopotamia, and Aſſyria were reduced into the ſtate of provinces. But the death of Trajan ſoon clouded the ſplendid proſpect, and it was juſtly to be dreaded, that ſo many diſtant nations would throw off the unaccuſtomed yoke, when they were no longer reſtrained by the powerful hand which had impoſed it."

We ſee then with what propriety the ſpirit of prophecy, in ſetting forth the future fortunes of the Roman empire, begins with the repreſentation of thoſe wide extended conqueſts by which it was ſoon to attain its higheſt aggrandizement and glory; and how remarkably this repreſentation was verified in the

the hiſtory which we have now recited.

The period of this ſeal, as it begins with the reign of Trajan, in the year 98, continues, as we ſhall have occaſion to ſhew afterwards, for 82 years, ending in the year 180 (a).

Let

(a) There is little diverſity of opinion among expoſitors reſpecting the meaning of this firſt ſeal. The opinion of thoſe who underſtand theſe prophecies chiefly of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, are ſo evidently erroneous, that I mean not particularly to notice them, notwithſtanding that they have been held by great men of high character and learning, ſuch as Grotius, Howard, Lightfoot, Wetſtein and others. It is remarkable however, that the late Biſhop Newton, though he follows a very different ſcheme, agrees with ſome of them in underſtanding the circumſtances exhibited at the opening of this ſeal, to denote the conqueſts of Veſpaſian and Titus, and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. But the great body of expoſitors

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Let us here ſtop for a moment to conſider the inſtructive leſſons which are taught in this remarkable prophecy.

expoſitors apply it, as has been obſerved, to the propagation of the goſpel, and the ſpiritual conqueſts of the Redeemer. This is the interpretation of Bullinger, Forbes, and Bernard, and, though not very conſiſtently with his ſcheme, even of the learned Mede himſelf; likewiſe of Durham, Waple, Vitringa, Lowman, &c. There are many ſtrong objections, however, to this interpretation. It is altogether uncongenial, as has been already noticed, to the emblematical import of the other horſemen, who ſeem beſt underſtood of the character and circumſtances of the Roman empire in its progreſs to ruin. Beſides, it does not comport with the regal dignity of Chriſt upon his aſcenſion into heaven, to ſuppoſe that the crown was given unto him only at the commencement of this viſion: and finally, upon this interpretation, it deſtroys the regular and deciſive order of this prophetical ſcenery in the opening of the ſeveral ſeals, as it is impoſſible to give any ſatisfying reaſon for the termination of this ſeal before the end of time: the Saviour unqueſtionably carrying on his conqueſts till then; and

phecy.—And can we fail to obſerve, that all the effects of the greateſt power and policy of this world, are as much in the hand of God, and as much ſubject to his controul, as the moſt ordinary occurrences and events. We ſee the higheſt aggrandizement of the haughty tyranny of Rome, the perſon by whom it was to attain that aggrandizement, and the conqueſts which were to mark its utmoſt boundary, all diſtinctly and clearly deſcribed as a part

and indeed the chief of them being repreſented as refered nearly to that period. I confeſs I was at firſt carried away by the ſmooth tide of opinion. Theſe difficulties, however, ſoon appeared to obſtruct my courſe. I heſitated, I conſidered, and at lenth ſettled in the judgment which I have above delivered. Some time after I was favoured by a friend with Abadie "ſur l'ouverture des ſceaux," with whoſe ſcheme I was altogether unacquainted, and had the ſatisfaction to obſerve that the ſame interpretation had been given by that well informed and able writer.

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part of the over-ruling providence of God, and which therefore muſt have been ſubſervient to his vaſt deſigns. We perceive great advantage afforded to the progreſs of Chriſtianity through that wide extended empire, when the hands of the tyrants were reſtrained from oppreſſing it. We ſee proviſion made for the vaſt enlargement of the church upon the overthrow of paganiſm, notwithſtanding all the diminution which the empire ſhould then have ſuffered. And, perhaps, a penetrating eye will be able to diſcern, even at this early period, in the comparative facility with which the goſpel might be ſpread to ſuch a vaſt extent; ſome of the latent cauſes of the prodigious power of antichriſt, when the regal government of Rome was deſtroyed, and when thoſe

thoſe kingdoms which had broken off from that unwieldy government gave their power unto the beaſt. "How unſearchable are thy judgments, O Lord! and thy ways paſt finding out!"

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SECOND SEAL.

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Ver. 3. *And when he had opened the the ſecond ſeal, I heard the ſecond beaſt ſay, Come and ſee.*

Ver. 4. *And there went out another horſe that was red; and power was given to him that ſat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they ſhould kill one another: and there was given unto him a great ſword.*

Under the firſt ſeal, we had occaſion to obſerve the Roman empire raiſed to the higheſt pinnacle of its greatneſs. There is no room to doubt that this ſeal repreſents the firſt

firſt ſtep of its decline. This was to be brought about by war and bloodſhed. Conqueſt is carried on by the ſame means, and yet the emblematical figures which are here exhibited, are very different from the former. The rider is here mounted upon a *red horſe*, denoting that the horrors of war were to be ſeen and felt by the Roman people themſelves: he having power to take *peace from the earth*, that is, from the empire: whereas, in the former caſe, all that they beheld was the *rider going forth* with the inſtruments of conqueſt, and returning with the fair trophies of victory. But now the empire itſelf is to be the ſcene of confuſion and bloodſhed, *men killing one another*, and therefore there was given unto this rider *a great ſword.*

The deſcription is marked with

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very diſtinguiſhing characters, and by attentively obſerving them we ſhall probably be led to the objects to which they refer.

The Roman empire, after it had arrived at its full ſtature by the conqueſts of Trajan, continued for a conſiderable time in a ſtate of peace and proſperity. This was the caſe during the ſucceeding reigns of Hadrian and the Antonines. It is true that Hadrian yielded up the conqueſts which his predeceſſor had ſo rapidly made. This, however, inſtead of being any injury to the empire, turned out to its advantage, as it reduced that enormous government to a manageable ſize. It is likewiſe true that in the beginning of the reign of Hadrian, and perhaps before Trajan himſelf had finiſhed his career, violent, and indeed, terrible inſurrections of the

Jews

Jews had taken place in ſome of the provinces. Theſe were attended with the ſlaughter of many thouſands both of themſelves and of the Romans, before they were ſubdued; and by the horrors which they occaſioned, interpreters have very naturally been induced to conſider them as the accompliſhment of this prophetical repreſentation. But as this people were naturally enemies to the government under which they lived, when their numbers were diminiſhed, and their power waſted, even at a great expence of Roman blood, this, inſtead of weakening the force of the empire, rather tended to promote its ſecurity and peace.

We muſt therefore look for the ſymptoms of the diminution of the Roman power and greatneſs at ſome after period. Theſe make their

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their appearance in very ſtriking colours, in the reign of Commodus, the diſſolute ſon of Antoninus the philoſopher. And in his character and government, and the effects which they produced, we ſhall, I apprehend, find the true meaning of this emblematical picture realized.

Commodus, by the conſent of hiſtorians, was one of the moſt worthleſs and cruel tyrants that ever diſgraced a throne. His debaucheries were ſcandalous and unbounded; and he ſported with the lives of his ſubjects, in a manner the moſt wantonly barbarous. The abhorrence in which he was juſtly held by his ſubjects, and eſpecially by all the men of dignity and character in the metropolis, gave occaſion to a conſpiracy againſt his life. This exaſperated his reſentment,

ment, and introduced thoſe horrid ſcenes of cruelty and bloodſhed which ſtained the annals of his reign. As he was made to underſtand that the plot had originated in the ſenate, this inſpired him both with hatred and dread of that venerable body, and many perſons of eminence fell a ſacrifice to his revenge. "Suſpicion", to uſe the words of Mr. Gibbon, "was equivalent to proof, trial to condemnation. The execution of a conſiderable ſenator was attended with the death of all who might lament and revenge his fate; and when Commodus had once taſted human blood, he became incapable of pity or remorſe."

Amidſt the general diſcontent which was excited by his intolerable tyranny and rapacity, the nerves of diſcipline were relaxed. A diſ-

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A diſtant province, obſerving the weakneſs of government, demanded the death of one miniſter: an enraged populace exacted the head of another. Deſertion prevailed among the troops: the deſerters betook themſelves to robbery; and Maternus, though only a private ſoldier, collecting theſe banditti into an army, plundered the rich provinces of Gaul and Spain, marched his troops into Italy, and formed the daring reſolution of killing the Emperor and mounting the vacant throne. This he would probably have affected, had not the infidelity of an accomplice ruined the deſign.

Under the wretched government then of the cruel and brutiſh Commodus, we diſcover the commencement of the decline of the Roman greatneſs. He is fitly repreſented as *taking peace from the earth*, by provoking

voking the people to insurrection and revolt; and when we consider his enormous strength, and the infamous profession of a gladiator, in which he delighted, it cannot but strike us with the utmost propriety, that *there was given unto him a great sword.*

After all, however, he is to be understood only as the introducer of that state of things in the empire, of which internal disorder and rapine and bloodshed, were the distinguishing characters. These preyed upon the vitals of the Roman power, and prepared the way for its approaching fall; and this state of things, as we learn from the subsequent history, continued almost without intermission, till the time of Alexander, a period of not less than 42 years.

The spirit of prophecy passes over in

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in ſilence the excellent adminiſtration of Pertinax, becauſe his reign continued only for a few months. After he had fallen a ſacrifice to his love of order, a circumſtance the moſt humiliating immediately occurred. The empire was publicly ſet up to ſale by the ſoldiers, and was actually diſpoſed of to the higheſt bidder. Didius Julianus, raiſed to the imperial throne in this diſhonourable way, might have eaſily anticipated the contempt in which he muſt have been held, both by the people and the ſoldiers. He bore their reproaches with a degree of patience that approached to meanneſs. The weakneſs of his government was perceived by all: this was the occaſion of great diſturbances and bloodſhed. Peſcennius Niger revolted, and was acknowledged Emperor in the eaſt. About

the

the ſame time (A. D. 193) Septemius Severus was ſaluted with the title of Auguſtus in Illyricum. He marched directly to Rome, and was declared Emperor by the ſenate. Theſe ambitious officers made the empire a ſcene of blood. A cruel war immediately enſued, Niger was totally overthrown; but not till after theſe terrible battles, in the laſt of which twenty thouſand men are ſaid to have been ſlain upon the ſide of Niger alone.

But Severus ſeems ſtill to have been under apprehenſions from another diſtinguiſhed character. Clodius Albinus was at that time governor of Britain. He was as much the favourite of the ſenate, as Severus by his cruelty had made himſelf the object of their abhorrence. He had got himſelf declared Emperor in that province. From thence

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he paſſed into Gaul, where he was oppoſed by Severus with a great army. A battle was fought upon the plains of Lyons, one of the moſt fierce and bloody recorded in hiſtory; in which, though with the utmoſt danger to himſelf, Severus overcame and ſlew his rival. Thus, till he was firmly eſtabliſhed upon the throne, the empire was a ſcene of diſcord and ſlaughter. Indeed the whole of Severus's reign is marked with cruelty and blood. Upwards of forty ſenators, in the courſe of a few days, fell a ſacrifice to his jealouſy or revenge; and at another period a conſiderable number more; beſides a great body of people of an inferior rank.

His ſon Caracalla, who ſucceeded to the empire (A. D. 211,) was diſtinguiſhed for nothing but the moſt horrid oppreſſion and cruelty. He began

began with the murder of his brother Geta, who was his colleague in the government, and evidently ſhewed, in a number of ſhocking inſtanees, that he took pleaſure in the miſeries, and even in the deſtruction, of his ſubjects. But nothing can ſet forth his monſtrous barbarity in a more dreadful light, than the maſſacre of the inhabitants of Alexandria. To encreaſe the horror of the ſcene, he had appointed it to be executed in the night. It is ſcarcely poſſible to deſcribe it in any adequate terms. The city overflowed with blood; the houſes were filled with ſlain; and returning light diſcovered in every ſtreet a dreadful ſpectacle of the devaſtation which the remorſeleſs tyrant had produced. But his cruelty was not yet ſatiated. Next day he iſſued out his commands that the

ſlaughter

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ſlaughter ſhould be renewed, that he might have the pleaſure of beholding it from the temple of Serapis in which he was lodged; nor did he put a period to the carnage till he had left only a few of the inhabitants to deplore the unparalleled butchery (a).

During this long ſeries of oppreſſion and miſery the Roman power was gradually diminiſhed; the ſoldiers became profligate and unmanageable; the government was almoſt diſorganized, and the diſorders continued unremedied in the following reigns of Macrinus and Eliagabolus, and received only a temporary check after the death of

(a) The only reaſon that ſeems to be aſſigned for this maſſacre is, that it was in revenge of the ſatirical ſeverity with which he had been glanced at by the inhabitants of that city, in conſequence of the death of Geta.

of the laſt of thoſe emperors, the moſt extravagant and the moſt contemptible of tyrants.

It appears then what reaſon we have for fixing the commencement of the period of this ſeal at the beginning of the reign of Commodus in the year 180, and for continuing its duration to the death, or rather the murder, of Eliagabolus, in the year 222 (a).

But

(a) With reſpect to the meaning and application of this, as of the former ſeal, there is no great diverſity of opinions among the moſt eminent expoſitors. Mede underſtands it of the civil wars in which the empire was involved in the times of Trajan and Hadrian, occaſioned by the inſurrection of the Jews, and of the dreadful ſlaughter which they produced. In this opinion he is followed by Goodwin, Fleming, Waple, Lowman, Newton, and likewiſe by Abbadie, only with this difference, that he reſtricts thoſe internal commotions to the reign of Hadrian. Durham, following

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But let us not turn away our eyes from this melancholy ſcene, without reflecting on the ſtriking picture it exhibits of the inſtability of worldly greatneſs. Where were now the ſplendid conqueſts of Trajan, ſo recently and ſo rapidly made? Thoſe rich

ing the opinion of ſome foreign divines, underſtands it of the perſecutions of the church, and applies it to thoſe that took place under Nero and Domitian. The worthy author ſeems to feel the difficulty in which he is involved in ſuppoſing that the church is here called *the earth*, from which *peace was to be taken*, and endeavours to extricate himſelf from it as well as he can. He produces chap. iii. 10. vii. 1. xii. 9. xiii. 14. and xiv. 6. as a proof that the church is in this book ſometimes called *the earth*. This however is ſo far from being clearly the ſenſe of *earth* in any of thoſe paſſages, that, I am afraid, the enquiring reader will be ready to think, that it is attempting to prove one thing by another, which is at leaſt not more certain or evident than itſelf. I only ſubjoin the interpretation of Vitringa, who underſtands

rich and extenſive territories, which he added as appendages to the magnificence of the Roman empire, had been already reſumed by their former lords. Where were now the proſperity and the glory of the times of the Antonines? They were exchanged, alas, for oppreſſion and murders, and for their neceſſary attendants,

ſtands this ſeal, chiefly, as a prophecy of the Diocletian perſecution. This learned expoſitor takes no notice of the difficulty which Durham felt, but endeavours to obviate an objection ariſing from the phraſe, *that they ſhould kill one another*, by denying that it neceſſarily denotes mutual ſlaughter, which rarely happens in the caſe of perſecution, and we are ſure did not take place at that time, by quoting Matt. xxiv. 10. and Gal. v. 26. where he thinks it muſt be differently underſtood. This however, it will be allowed, is not the moſt natural ſenſe of the expreſſion, and therefore it is againſt an interpretation, which at beſt can only be founded on high probability, when the words muſt be ſtrained in order to make it out.

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attendants, insurrection and revolt. But this proud and imperious tyranny must be brought low. The God who rules over the kingdoms of the earth had determined it, and we behold the first awful step of its decline marked with the horrors of confusion and of blood.

At the same time, can we but admire the dignified attitude in which the apostle appears, when delivering these grand and interesting prophecies! Though suffering under the hand of a wicked tyrant, we see him looking down with contempt upon his unhallowed domination, and denouncing upon it calamity and judgment. Though carried an exile into a desolate island, and regarded by an overbearing policy as entirely subjugated to its power, he is raised to an authority and greatness incomparably

ably above it; and we behold him, in this, and ſome of the following prophecies, pointing the weapons of the almighty againſt it for its deſtruction. What can be more noble than to ſee the deſpiſed fiſherman of Bethſaida holding the fates of monarchs in his hand, and ſhewing how He that ſitteth in the heavens ſhall deride them, how he ſhall vex them in his ſore diſpleaſure. "Let God ariſe and let his enemies be ſcattered!" CHAP. VI.

THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SEAL.

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Ver. 5. *And when he had opened the third ſeal, I heard the third beaſt ſay, Come and ſee. And I beheld, and lo, a black horſe; and he that ſat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*

Ver. 6. *And I heard a voice in the midſt of the four beaſts ſay, A meaſure of wheat for a penny, and three meaſures of barley for a penny; and ſee thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

Under this ſeal, we have a ſhort period of reformation in the Roman government, which ſeems to have put a ſtop for a little to the progreſs of its decline, and to have afforded a tranſient

tranſient interruption of that dreadful train of calamities with which it was both preceded and followed. The rider here is mounted upon a black horſe, the emblem of gravity and ſadneſs; and he has *a pair of balances in his hand*, the emblem of equity and order. There is evidently an intimation of great ſcarcity, approaching to famine, at the time of his appearance: but the regulations which he adopts ſeem to produce moderate plenty. Therefore there is a voice from the midſt of the four living creatures, which ſays, *A meaſure of wheat for a penny, and three meaſures of barley for a penny.*

It has been much diſputed by interpreters, whether this is a deſcription of ſcarcity, or of plenty. A greek proverb, preſerved by Eraſmus, has been repeatedly quoted upon the ſubject, which rather leads

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leads to conſider it as a deſcription of ſcarcity: "Sit not down upon thy (*chœnix*, or) meaſure." The meaſure has been ſuppoſed to be ſuch a quantity as is ſufficient for a man's ſuſtenance for a day; and a *Denarius*, which we render *penny*, to be the price of a day's labour. According to this eſtimate, it muſt be a deſcription of ſcarcity; although not ſo great a ſcarcity as has been commonly underſtood; for if a man lived upon barley, he would be able to earn three days proviſion by one day's labour. It is not however certain that the "chœnix" or "meaſure" was only ſuch a quantity as is here ſuppoſed; or that a day's wages was only a "denarius" or penny. The reaſon given for this laſt ſuppoſition is, that in our Lord's parable of the labourers in the vineyard, every man is ſaid to have

have received "a penny" or denarius for his day's work. But it is probable that at the period to which this prophecy refers, when luxury ſo much abounded, and when taxes were ſo heavily impoſed, the price of labour muſt have been greatly advanced.

With reſpect to the *chœnix* it is by no means certain what quantity it contained. But even ſuppoſing it was only a day's ſuſtenance for a man, he would ſubſiſt upon barley almoſt for a whole week, by two days labour, even at *a penny* a day. Let us ſuppoſe he gained three denarii, or pennies, in two days, which is not unlikely in a ſtate into which riches had flowed in a very high degree ſince our Saviour's time, and two days labour would maintain a man for a week and a third. Let us conſider too, that this is the ſup-

poſed

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poſed price of the moſt common and meaneſt labour, and that all the artizans in the country may be allowed to earn much higher wages, and we ſhall ſee, that this cannot be underſtood to be deſcriptive of ſcarcity. Upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, how forced the interpretation of the injunction delivered by the voice, " and ſee thou hurt not the oil and the wine," as if this denoted a ſcarcity even of thoſe articles likewiſe (a), contrary to the uniform meaning of the expreſſion, from which it is obvious, that they were not to be injured, but were to be preſerved in plenty, ſo that a little of theſe comforts might ſometimes fall to the lot even of the poor labourer.

When we put all theſe circumſtances together, we cannot underſtand

(a) See Lowman upon this place.

ſtand this to be a deſcription of a time of ſcarcity: neither do I ſuppoſe that it is a deſcription of great abundance. This will be allowed to be as bad for the intereſts of a ſtate or people as the other. It encourages idleneſs; it provokes diſſipation; and it is well known that diſorders in a ſtate are produced equally by wantonneſs on the one hand, and oppreſſion on the other.

I have only further to obſerve, that *the pair of balances* in the hand of this rider, have been very improperly connected by interpreters with the barley and the wheat, as if theſe commodities were to be weighed out with the moſt ſcrupulous exactneſs, whereas it is evident, they were ſold by meaſure. This emblem is meant to characterize the rider himſelf, and is no otherwiſe applicable to the ſtate of proviſions than by the effects

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effects which a juſt and prudent œconomy may have upon it.

The proper meaning then of this whole repreſentation is, that the empire had now fallen once more under the management of ſalutary regulations, reſulting from the ſtricteſt attention to juſtice and good order.

Our next enquiry is, where we ſhall find an object that ſufficiently correſponds to this repreſentation, in that period of hiſtory in which we are led to expect it.

It is not a little ſurpriſing, that a man of ſo exact and penetrating a judgement as Mr. Mede, ſhould have directed us chiefly to Septimius Severus as the perſon in whom this prediction received its accompliſhment. But that great interpreter had unluckily fettered himſelf with the unauthenticated and fanciful opinion,

opinion, that the deſcription of the four living creatures is taken from the ſtandards of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs. This living creature had the face of a man, which is ſuppoſed to have been the ſtandard of Reuben on the ſouth ſide of the camp; he was therefore under the neceſſity of finding ſome perſon that came from the ſouth to whom he might apply the prediction. The character of Septimius Severus, however, cannot be ſhadowed forth by this emblematical repreſentation. The leading features of his character were ambition and cruelty; his temper was dark and deceitful; his revenge was unrelenting. Even his ſhew of juſtice itſelf degenerated into oppreſſion; and ſo unfeeling was his avarice that it was not unfrequently gratified by the confiſca-

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tion of the property of thoſe whom he had inhumanly murdered.

With reſpect to his public conduct, though he made ſome ſalutary regulations for the good of his ſubjects, and though his ambition led him to reconquer ſome of the provinces which had been loſt, even his wars were ſtained with cruelty; and for ſeveral years, while he was eſtabliſhing himſelf more firmly upon the throne, he filled the metropolis with maſſacres. To conclude, he added to all his other enormities, that of perſecuting the church: and, as a ſtriking evidence of his diſſolute principles, and of his diſregard even to decency itſelf, he delivered a panegyrick upon Commodus, the moſt abandoned of mortals, and required him to be ranked among the Gods. It was not ſurely in the hands of this

pagan

pagan emperor, as the above mentioned interpreter ſuppoſes, " that the golden balance of juſtice, let down from heaven, vibrated ſo magnificently upon the theatre of the world," as to be regarded and celebrated by the Spirit of God in this prophetical repreſentation (a).

Had he confined his views to Alexander Severus, he would have had much better reaſon for this opinion. That amiable prince might well be conſidered as a model of juſtice, and of many other excellent qualities which he poſſeſſed. But it is carefully to be obſerved, that it

(a) The words of Mede are beautiful—" En tibi, Lector, equi nigri feſſorem, auream illam & cœlitus demiſſam Juſtitiæ Trutinam, in theatro orbis terrarum magnifice librantem; quod tam inſigne fuit in imperatore pagano, ut ei, in hoc ſigillo, ſpiritum ſanctum reſpexiſſe, nemini mirum videri debeat."

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it is not as a private virtue in his mind, that his love of juſtice is here to be conſidered, but as it was employed to promote his people's good. Though he was only fourteen years of age when he aſcended the imperial throne, (A. D. 222) the rectitude of his diſpoſitions, together with the mildneſs and caution which he diſcovered, gave the happieſt preſages of his future reign. He diſmiſſed the miniſters of the tyrant Eliagabalus who preceded him: he choſe for his counſellors men of the moſt eſtabliſhed character both for probity and wiſdom, and immediately began to reform the enormous abuſes which had formerly prevailed. His mother, it has been ſaid, had embraced the Chriſtian faith, and he himſelf ſhewed great favour to Chriſtians, protected them from injuries, and had

had them often about his court. He ſeems not to have been ignorant of Chriſtian morality, and he is ſaid to have had the higheſt veneration for that comprehenſive and admirable maxim, "Do as you "would be done to."

Perhaps there is no period of the Roman hiſtory, in which the tide of proſperity flowed with ſuch an equal current over the whole extent of the empire, than during the reign of this excellent monarch. Hiſtory ſcarcely records any thing that may be called calamity belonging to that period. Juſtice was adminiſtered with faithfulneſs: the military diſcipline was reſtored: the ſenate recovered its importance and its dignity: ſecurity and order were every where eſtabliſhed: induſtry was encouraged: proviſions became moderately plenty: the public

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public granaries, which were almoſt empty at the acceſſion of this prince, were filled at a vaſt expence; and great quantities of corn and oil were diſtributed weekly among the poor citizens.

Such was the character of Alexander, and ſuch the happineſs of the Roman people under his government. The church likewiſe enjoyed an auſpicious calm. The period indeed was not of long duration: It continued only for thirteen years: But it is a period ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed for the moſt important civil benefits, as ſeems not unworthy the attention of the ſpirit of prophecy to deſcribe it; and it forms ſuch a ſtriking interval of proſperity in the midſt of declining greatneſs, as exactly correſponds to the intereſting train of predictions

predictions which we are now endeavouring to explain (a). CHAP. VI.

Let us here contemplate both the goodneſs and ſeverity of God, and obſerve how in the midſt of wrath he

(a) Expoſitors have gone into very different opinions reſpecting both the meaning, and the application of this ſeal. Several of thoſe who lived ſoon after the reformation underſtood it of falſe teachers, here repreſented as ſeated upon a black horſe, denoting, as they thought, the darkneſs, or blackneſs, of error, in oppoſition to the true, who, they think, are repreſented under the firſt ſeal as ſeated upon a white horſe, denoting, the illumination and the purity of the truth: and that the balance here ſignifies the balance of deceit. Somewhat allied to this opinion is that of the learned Vitringa, who interprets this ſeal of a ſcarcity of ſpiritual proviſions, the evident conſequence of prevailing error. But he explains the balance, of the deciſions of councils or general Synods, reſpecting the doctrines of faith; and applies this prophecy to that period which began with the reign of Conſtantine, and continued to the

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he remembers mercy. Many are the proofs which we have in the hiſtory of providence, that this is the

the end of the eighth century. Our own worthy Durham takes up this ſeal in a more enlarged view, as repreſenting the ſad ſtate of the church after the firſt two perſecutions, not ſo much ariſing from any particular trial, as from the concurrence of ſeveral; ſuch as perſecution, errors, and diviſions, by which the church's beauty was greatly marred and obſcured. He underſtands the "balance," of the pretext of legal authority and juſtice, by which perſecution was thus carried on. He explains "the vine and the oil", of the great fundamental and ſoul-refreſhing truths of the goſpel, which were to be preſerved uninjured amidſt all their calamities; and applies the whole to the period which begins with Trajan and ends with Severus. The great objection to theſe interpretations is, that they ſpiritualize the very words which are intended to explain the myſtical repreſentation without any neceſſity or warrant. Upon this principle they ſhould underſtand the words "*killing one another*" in the ſecond ſeal, of ſpiritual deſtruction; and they ſhould explain the

the manner of his procedure. And were it not for this, the ſpirit would fail before him, and the ſouls which

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the *deſtroying of men*, under the fourth ſeal, by ſword, famine, peſtilence, and beaſts of the earth, of ſpiritual miſery occaſioned by the wounding of their ſpiritual intereſts, by the want of ſpiritual proviſion, by their ſouls being over-run with ſpiritual diſtempers, and all their ſpiritual hopes and comforts being overthrown and deſtroyed. Further, this ſeal has been underſtood, by a conſiderable number, to ſignify *Famine;* among whom are to be ranked, Goodwin and Lowman; the former of whom applies it to the reign of Commodus; the latter, to all the reigns of the Antonines, of Commodus and Severus. On the other hand, ſeveral eminent expoſitors underſtand it rather of plenty than of ſcarcity, and conſider the character here repreſented, as diſtinguiſhed for juſtice: at the head of theſe Mede ought to be placed, followed by Waple, Newton and others, who have all therefore been conſidered as chargeable with the inconſiſtency of making a pagan virtue as much celebrated by the Spirit of God as if it had been a Chriſtian grace, and yet

at

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he hath made. Here he had reſpect particularly to the intereſts of his church and people, that they might

at the ſame time introducing it among emblems which are all deſcriptive of calamity and woe. The only perſon, that I know of, who has adopted this opinion in general, and avoided the apparent inconſiſtency, is Abbadie; he conſiders it as the character of a particular ſtate of the Roman empire or government, in which (ſo far as may be gathered from a ſhort hint) he ſeems to have been followed by Fleming. He thinks this character appears conſpicuouſly in the times of the Antonines and therefore applies this prophecy to them: but he has too much candour not to acknowledge the embarraſſment which he feels from the ſad injuſtice and cruelty which the Chriſtians ſuffered during that period, in moſt parts of the empire, when thoſe great cities of Aſia, Pergamos, Damaſcus, Perga, and Apamea, beſides many others of inferior note, were covered with the blood of martyrs, and when the Chriſtians ſuffered the like diſtreſſes both in the northern and ſouthern provinces. Finally, I muſt not omit to mention the very ſingular opinion of Dr. Beverly, which ſeems to have half converted Mr. Waple:

might have a breathing in the midſt of the oppreſſions which they ſuffered, and might thereby be the better prepared for future trials. In conſequence of this likewiſe the goſpel obtained a more free and uninterrupted courſe, and probably gained a great acceſſion of converts. Finally, even worldly and wicked men themſelves might learn from ſuch inſtances as this, how much they are indebted to the ſaints for their tranquillity and comfort.——Scenes of

Waple: he underſtands the horſeman to be Chriſt, and the pair of balances in his hand, to be the balances of the ſanctuary, in which he weighs the purity of the church during the whole time of the ſeals, one half of which, he thinks, beginning in the year 33 runs out with this ſeal in the year 237; the other half of courſe extending to the year 437 when he conceives the 1260 years of the apoſtacy begin.

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of diſtreſs and calamity being often interſperſed with reſtraints and mitigations, and ſometimes even with a little ſunſhine of proſperity, on their account.

THE OPENING OF THE FOURTH SEAL.

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Ver. 7. *And when he had opened the fourth ſeal, I heard the voice of the fourth beaſt ſay, Come and ſee.*

Ver. 8. *And I looked, and behold a pale horſe; and his name that ſat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with ſword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beaſts of the earth.*

The opening of this ſeal preſents to us a complicated ſcene of moſt awful judgments, which were inflicted all at once upon the Roman people for their enormous wickedneſs.

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neſs. It exhibited a perſon riding forth, whoſe character we cannot miſtake, for *his name was Death.* He was mounted upon *a pale horſe;* a colour ſuitable to his character and enterprize: and *hell*, or the grave, *followed after him*, not merely under the appearance of a receptacle for the dead, as has been thought by ſome, but, in all probability, in the form of an allegorical perſon that was to be active in the general deſtruction; for *power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the ſword, and with famine, and with death*, that is, with a deadly diſtemper, *and with the beaſts of the earth.* Here we have, what are called in ancient prophecy, God's four ſore judgments all united, war, and peſtilence, and famine, and the noiſome beaſt.

When

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When we look into the Roman hiſtory, we ſee this diſmal ſcene begin to open, immediately after the calm and pleaſant interval which we have juſt now been ſurveying. Then the ſavage Maximin aſcended the imperial throne (A. D. 235.) He gained the purple by aſſaſſinating the excellent Alexander, and through the whole of his reign it was drenched in barbarity and ſlaughter. His monſtrous ſize, and his almoſt incredible ſtrength, have been taken notice of by all the hiſtorians. But ſuch was his intolerable cruelty, that it produced revolts and inſurrections which convulſed the empire. The Senate declared him a public enemy: his friends and officers every where were murdered: the two Gordians were acknowledged emperors: and perſons of all ranks at Rome, crowding in vaſt

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vaſt multitudes to the temples, implored the protection of the gods againſt the ſanguinary tyrant; and, as he was now in one of the diſtant provinces, deprecated his return to the imperial city. The account of theſe alarming events inſpired him with madneſs. He marched to Italy: but in the mean time one of his officers defeats the troops of the Gordians at Carthage, in an engagement which proved fatal to them both, after they had reigned little more than a month.

Pupienus Maximus and Balbinus were then declared emperors by the Senate. The city was filled with tumult and with blood. War was levied againſt Maximin, but without much ſucceſs, till at laſt his ſoldiers mutinied againſt him and murdered both him and his ſon. The joy of the Romans upon this occaſion was

but

but of ſhort continuance. The Carpi, the Goths, and the Perſians, haraſſed the empire: the new Emperors became jealous of each other, and the prætorian guards ruſhed forward, and murdered them both.

During the ſucceeding reigns of the third Gordian and Philip, though the general calamity was certainly diminiſhed, the empire was repeatedly viſited both with invaſion and rebellion, ſo that this part of the period can ſcarcely be conſidered as aſſuming a different type. But when we look forward to the reign which immediately followed, we behold the deſtroying ſword brandiſhed in all its horrors. Decius began his government (A. D. 250) with cruelly perſecuting the Chriſtian church. Vaſt multitudes of Chriſtians were every where dragged to execution and to torment.

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The laws of humanity, and even the inſtincts of nature itſelf, were diſregarded, and the Chriſtians again experienced the accompliſhment of our Lord's prediction, that a man's foes ſhould be thoſe of his own houſehold. This bloody perſecution however was not of long duration. God provided relief for the Chriſtians, by the irruption of ſome of the barbarous nations into the provinces, which turned the attention of the emperor and of his miniſters into a different channel. Theſe were at length repulſed by the Emperor, but not till they had entirely cut off the army under his ſon, plundered Thrace, and, it is ſaid, killed about a hundred thouſand of the inhabitants.

The next Emperor, Gallus, followed the example of his predeceſſor in perſecuting the church. At the

the ſame time a dreadful plague broke out in the Upper Egypt, and, ſpreading with rapidity over the provinces and the empire, ſwept away a prodigious multitude of people, eſpecially at Rome, where it is ſaid to have raged with uncommon violence. The ſame year, (for Gallus reigned only a year and a half,) was remarkable for a ſevere and general drought, which was followed with a great famine; while the irruption of the barbarous nations from without, and civil diſcord within, added to the calamities of a wretched people.

Paſſing over the three months of the reign of Æmilian, we come to that of Valerian, and his ſon and ſucceſſor Gallienus, which were one continued ſcene of confuſion and calamity. The Chriſtians at that time were perſecuted with as great violence

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violence as in the reign of Decius, and the empire itſelf was greatly afflicted. The Franks, a people hitherto unknown in hiſtory, plundered and impoveriſhed the opulent country of Spain; and, paſſing into Africa, aſtoniſhed the diſtant province of Mauritania with their fury. The Suevi, or Alemanni, made an incurſion into Gaul, penetrated into Italy, and advanced as far as Ravenna, pillaging the country and putting the inhabitants to the ſword. The Goths conquered the Boſphorus, and, having acquired a naval force, ravaged the Aſiatic provinces; in repeated expeditions they deſtroyed ſeveral cities, murdered many of the inhabitants, annihilated the poor remains of ancient Troy, profaned every thing ſacred, and pillaged and burnt the temple of Epheſus, the glory of

Aſia

Aſia for its magnificence and its riches: then paſſing into Greece, they burnt Athens, Corinth, Sparta, and Argos, and produced deſolation and ruin through the whole extent of Achaia. The Perſians likewiſe over-ran and laid waſte the eaſtern provinces in both theſe reigns; and though, afterwards, they were checked in their progreſs, it was not till they had defeated the Roman army which marched to oppoſe them, and till the Emperor Valerian was made priſoner by the Perſian monarch, who ſubjected him to many humiliating indignities, and left him to languiſh away his life in hopeleſs captivity.

Soon after the captivity of Valerian, the moſt alarming troubles raged at Alexandria; the city became a field of blood and carnage, and the bodies of the ſlain are ſaid

to

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to have reſiſted the waters of the Nile in their courſe. The war was attended with famine, and the famine was followed by a plague.

Beſides the wars and tumults which have been mentioned, the empire was at the ſame time afflicted with other dreadful calamities. An awful and portentous darkneſs overſpread the heavens for ſeveral days; a tremendous noiſe, like that of thunder, was heard, not in the air, but in the bowels of the earth; the earth opened in ſeveral places, and ſwallowed up great numbers of people with the houſes in which they dwelt; the ſea burſt in upon the continent, and produced the moſt threatening devaſtation; and beſides, the plague raged with great violence in Greece, and in Egypt, and over all the empire, but chiefly at Rome,

where

where it ſwept off, for ſome time, five thouſand perſons every day.

The author of the hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire, while he affects to diſcredit ſome of the alarming tokens of the juſt judgement of Heaven which have now been recited, gives an account of this period, ſufficiently ſtriking, at once to verify and appropriate, the prophetical deſcription which we are now conſidering. The paſſage is too remarkable not to be inſerted at length. ‘ Our habits of thinking," ſays he, " ſo fondly connect the order of the univerſe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of hiſtory has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkneſs, and a crowd of prodigies fictitious or exaggerated. But a long and general famine was a calamity

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calamity of a more ſerious kind. It was the inevitable conſequence of rapine and oppreſſion, which extirpated the produce of the preſent, and the hope of future harveſts. Famine is almoſt always followed by epidemical diſeaſes, the effects of ſcarcity and unwholeſome food. Other cauſes muſt however have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year 250, to the year 265, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almoſt every family of the Roman empire. During ſome time 5000 perſons died daily in Rome, and many towns that had eſcaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.

" We have the knowledge of a very curious circumſtance, of ſome uſe perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact

exact regiſter was kept at Alexandria, of all the citizens entitled to receive the diſtribution of corn. It was found, that the ancient number of thoſe compriſed between the ages of forty and ſeventy had been equal to the whole ſum of claimants, from fourteen to fourſcore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. Applying this authentic fact to the moſt correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had periſhed; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might ſuſpect that war, peſtilence, and famine, had conſumed, in a few years, the moiety of the human ſpecies *."

* Gibbon, v 1. ch. x. Sub fin.

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Such then are the characters of this ſad and eventful period: famine, peſtilence, and war, raging with uncommon and continued violence: characters that ſo exactly, and ſo awfully, correſpond to the prophetical deſcription, as to leave the mind almoſt without a doubt, that this was the period to which it referred; eſpecially when we add, what is by no means improbable, and what appears likewiſe to have been matter of fact, that fierce and ravenous animals, feeling themſelves undiſturbed, in conſequence of the depopulation of the country, multiplied apace, and at length, emboldened by their number and compelled by want, entered even into villages and towns, and deſtroyed the inhabitants. There is ſtill one other calamitous circumſtance to be ſubjoined to this detail; that in the

the reign of Gallienus, the empire was torn by uſurpation; no leſs than thirty tyrants (a) being ſaid to have ſtarted up at once, who all came to a miſerable end, as did likewiſe that whole liſt of emperors which we have been recounting.

The period of this ſeal may be conſidered as terminating with the murder of Gallienus; theſe ſcenes of horror being in a great meaſure removed during the ſubſequent reigns, till the time of Diocletian. It therefore fills up the term of 46 years, beginning in the year 222, and ending in the year 268 (b).

Dreadful is the ſituation of a people when their enormities have drawn

(a) Gibbon maintains that they were only nineteen.

(b) It is unneceſſary to narrate the opinion of Mr. Mede reſpecting the import and the accompliſhment

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drawn down the judgements of God upon them. In ſuch a caſe, all the power and policy of this world can bring no relief; and even the greateſt empires upon earth are as weak and defenceleſs as the meaneſt creature that crawls upon the ground.

pliſhment of this ſeal, as it correſponds in general with that which I have above delivered; only he inclines to underſtand *the beaſts of the earth*, of the thirty tyrants, who were the inſtruments of thoſe judgments, and who raged like ſavage beaſts in the empire. He grounds this interpretation upon the change of the conſtruction here; but John often changes the conſtruction without changing the meaning. The learned reader will find a remarkable inſtance of this kind, chap. xviii. 12. Lowman underſtands, and applies this ſeal in the ſame way with Mede, but he extends it from the year 211, to the year 275: while Abbadie extends it from the beginning of the reign of Commodus in the year 180, to the perſecution by Diocletian in the year 303, and explains the name

ground. In this melancholy hiſtory, we perceive, how various are the means by which the vengeance of heaven may be inflicted; and when this vengeance is once exerted, the time cannot be diſtant when the

name *Death* of him that ſat upon the horſe, to denote that the throne of the empire, during that period, would be a deadly throne to thoſe who ſat upon it. Durham underſtands this ſeal, of the perſecution of the church under Diocletian. But it muſt be difficult to give a diſtinct and proper meaning to *famine*, and eſpecially to *peſtilence* upon this interpretation, becauſe this laſt, at leaſt, is a judgement immediately from God. David knew this diſtinction well, when he chooſed the peſtilence, and probably even famine, in preference to the ſword, ſaying, "let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hands of man. So the Lord ſent a peſtilence upon Iſrael." It is not very ſatisfying to expound them in a general way, as this worthy interpreter does, of the greateſt depth

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the dominion of the proud ſhall be deſtroyed.

But we obſerve here, as in other caſes, that the judgements of God tend only to blind the minds, and to harden the hearts of the impenitent. That devoted people whoſe

depth of affliction in which the church is involved, and to aſſert that any one of theſe having been found to ſignify affliction or perſecution to the church, the ſame thing muſt be underſtood of all. I ſhall only ſubjoin the interpretation of Vitringa, who following the opinion of ſome divines about the time of the reformation, underſtands this ſeal to prefigure the Saracens, and the Turks, by whom God brought a ſevere ſcourge upon the Chriſtians, for their groſs and ſhameful corruption. He takes the rider to be the angel of death, and the buſineſs which is here aſſigned him, both in his nature and extent, comports well with the miſeries which have been produced by thoſe deluded and daring people. He obſerves from Leuenclavius, that the whole of their law and religion

whoſe hiſtory we have been ſurveying, conſidered the chriſtians as the cauſe of their calamities. They thought the indulgence granted to them increaſed the anger of their gods; and therefore they pointed their reſentment and enmity the more againſt them. This however only

ligion is ſanguinary, and therefore they have brought blood and ſlaughter wherever they have come; they have laid waſte the fineſt countries, and made them deſerts for wild beaſts, in conſequence of which famine and peſtilence have frequently enſued. He obſerves that this calamity happened towards the end of the period which he allots to the preceding ſeal: for Mahometaniſm, which began in the time of Heraclius, had increaſed by the time when the diſſentions of the Monothelites were lighted up. Afterwards the Turks, burſting forth from Tartary by the gates of Caucaſus, firſt ſhewed themſelves in Aſia in that very age in which the Chriſtians in the eaſt were contending fiercely about images.

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only haſtened the overthrow which they were ſoon to meet with. " How terrible art thou in thy works, O God ! at thy rebuke the ſons of the mighty are aſtoniſhed. Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may ſtand in thy ſight when once thou art angry !"

THE

THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL.

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Ver. 9. *And when he had opened the fifth ſeal, I ſaw under the altar the ſouls of them that were ſlain for the word of God, and for the teſtimony which they held.*

Ver. 10. *And they cried with a loud voice, ſaying, How long, O Lord, holy, and true, doſt thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!*

Ver. 11. *And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was ſaid unto them, that they ſhould reſt yet for a little ſeaſon, until their fellow-ſervants and their brethren that ſhould be killed, as they were, ſhould be fulfilled.*

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The great intent of this prophetical repreſentation is obvious and plain. It denotes a time of ſevere and unrelenting perſecution by the moſt palpable and ſtriking images. In this character of atrocity and horror, is the heathen Roman empire here exhibited, ſtretching forth its hand againſt the church, and thereby filling up the meaſure of its iniquity to its deſtruction. The prophecy ſeems to intimate, that this haughty, perſecuting power, had been permitted long to exerciſe its cruelties upon the church. This is probably the emphaſis of the expreſſion uttered by theſe bleeding ſpirits, *O Lord, how long*. Difficulties ariſe however about the circumſtances of the viſion. The ſouls of the martyrs are repreſented as *lying under the altar*. But what are we to underſtand by theſe ſouls lying under the altar?

altar? Are we to underſtand them of their bodies, as ſome interpreters contend? Moſt certainly this is not the meaning: for the bodies of the beaſts that were ſlain of old, lay *upon* the altar, not *under* it. But the blood, when they were killed, flowed down beneath the altar; and let it be obſerved, that the blood was conſidered as the life or ſoul of the animal. John, therefore, in this viſion, beheld the life, or the ſoul, riſing up again at the foot of the altar, and crying for vengeance.

But how are we to underſtand this as being ſeen in heaven? The altar of burnt-offering was without the ſanctuary, and therefore cannot conſiſtently be placed in heaven; nor can ſouls be repreſented there as of a vindictive diſpoſition. In anſwer to this, I would obſerve, that

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it appears by various paſſages in this book, that the heaven, into which the apoſtle was taken up, had the whole temple and all its furniture ſtanding in it: and as theſe ſouls, pleading for vengeance, muſt be underſtood in a figurative ſenſe upon every ſcheme, there cannot, one ſhould think, be any impropriety, nay, rather there is a particular beauty and energy, in underſtanding this as a ſtrong intimation that the juſtice of their cauſe called loudly for vengeance, and ſhould certainly obtain it *White robes being given them*, denotes the triumphant and glorious iſſue of their unjuſt and cruel ſufferings: and their being commanded *to reſt for a little ſeaſon*, ſignifies, that notwithſtanding the juſtice of their cauſe drawing judgements after it, yet its agency was to ceaſe, as it were, or

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to be ſuſpended, for a little, *till their fellow-ſervants, and their brethren, who were to be killed, as they were, ſhould be fulfilled.*

The period of hiſtory to which this prophecy belongs may be determined with conſiderable eaſe and certainty. It muſt be remarkable both for the ſeverity, and for the duration of the perſecution which takes place under it; and we are to look for it, according to the order of theſe prophecies, after the complicated calamities that have been already deſcribed, and before that aſtoniſhing revolution which the opening of the next ſeal ſo awfully diſplays. In the reign of Diocletian, then, it has commonly been ſuppoſed, we meet with a perſecution, which, both for its ſeverity and for its duration, is fully adequate to what we are here led to expect. Let

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us take a view of this melancholy ſcene, although perhaps it will appear, that, awful as the ſpectacle is which it preſents, it does not come up to the full import of this prophetical repreſentation.

Soon after Diocletian was raiſed to the imperial throne, he aſſumed Maximian as his fellow-Emperor, and ſhared equally with him the authority and the glory of the government. About ten years afterwards, when the empire was preſſed by ſurrounding enemies, the two emperors adopted Galerius and Conſtantius Chlorus as Cæſars, veſted with proconſular power, and who ſhould ſucceed them in the empire. Of theſe, the former was an inveterate enemy of the Chriſtians, and at laſt ſtirred up Diocletian to endeavour by the moſt violent perſecution to deſtroy them. This perſecution

fecution began in the year 303, and continued, with relentleſs fury, through the long period of ten ſucceeding years. Chriſtians of all ranks were dragged to puniſhment. The cruelty of their perſecutors reſpected neither the blooming beauty of youth, nor the infirmities of advanced age. But while it was marked with the moſt unfeeling violence, it had the calmneſs to conſider by what means it might beſt prolong and multiply the agonies of its victims. The followers of the Saviour, therefore, were not merely beheaded, or caſt into the ſea, or killed with the ſword; they were crucified, they were ſcourged to death, their limbs were drawn a ſunder, and their fleſh at intervals was torn with pincers from their bones: not to mention various other methods of torture, too ſhocking,

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ing, and ſometimes too indecent, to be deſcribed.

It is impoſſible to reckon up the number of Chriſtians who ſuffered under this dreadful perſecution. But if we conſider, that it extended almoſt over the whole Roman empire, not excepting even Britain itſelf, and that it has been computed that more than 200,000 periſhed by it in Egypt alone, we ſhall be aſoniſhed at the immenſity of the number, which, upon the moſt moderate calculation, muſt be ſuppoſed. Indeed it appears to have had for its object the total extermination of the Chriſtian name; and it was proſecuted with unwearied aſſiduity till the deſign was thought to be completed.

Such then was the violence, and ſuch the extent, of this tremendous and long continued perſecution:

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and is it not natural to ſuppoſe, that a period, at once ſo calamitous to the church, and ſo ruinous to the empire itſelf, ſhould be particularly taken notice of in this ſeries of predictions.

But I cannot perſuade myſelf, that the ſpirit of prophecy confines his views to this melancholy period, in the affecting repreſentation that is now before us. We have ſeen the vengeance of Heaven poured out repeatedly upon the empire, under ſome of the foregoing ſeals, in a variety of terrible judgements with which it was viſited. It is not a little remarkable, however, that not the ſmalleſt hint has been given of the cauſe of theſe judgements. But we cannot heſitate to aſcribe them to its enormous wickedneſs, and particularly, to its oppoſition to Chriſtianity, and

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its perſecuting the church. We have undoubted evidence, from hiſtory, that this was its character in former periods. In many of the preceding reigns, the Chriſtians were treated with great injuſtice and cruelty, as well as in the preſent. This was the caſe under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, and even the Antonines themſelves. It was likewiſe the caſe under Severus, Maximin, Decius, and Valerian. In thoſe reigns, vaſt multitudes of Chriſtians were ruined in their ſubſtance, were baniſhed, impriſoned, and put to death. But in none of them, were they driven to ſuch extremity of ſuffering as in the reign of Decius; the perſecution under whom, though ſhort in its continuance, ſcarcely yielded in ſeverity to that which was raiſed by Diocletian. The perſecution under Valerian did not

not wear a much milder aſpect. And now, when the church was again plunged into the depths of tribulation, and was ſubjected anew to all thoſe horrible cruelties which ſhe had already ſo often and ſo long experienced; what can be more natural, than for thoſe holy martyrs, who were ſlain for the word of God, and for the teſtimony which they held, to be repreſented *as crying*, and as crying even *with a loud voice*, *How long*, *O Lord*, *holy and true*, *doſt thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

I cannot help thinking therefore, that, though the ſpirit of prophecy ſeems to point directly at this period, in which the church was filling up that which remained of her afflictions from her heathen enemies, he hath reſpect, likewiſe, to all that ſucceſſion of ſufferings which ſhe had

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had formerly endured. Upon this ground alone we can perceive, not only the propriety, but likewiſe, the affecting energy of that part of the martyrs' expoſtulation, *O Lord! how long*—

It may be ſaid indeed, that, by ſuppoſing the cry of theſe martyrs to be uttered only towards the cloſe of this perſecution, after it had carried on its ravages almoſt for ten years, we may ſee the propriety of the expreſſion in a light ſufficiently ſtriking. But it ought to be conſidered, that this deſtroys the meaning of the anſwer which they received, when it was ſaid, that *they ſhould reſt for a little ſeaſon.* Upon this ſuppoſition, there was no ſeaſon remaining, till judgement was to be executed upon their enemies. That period, ſo fatal to them, and ſo joyful to the ſaints, was then certainly

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at hand. Then their heathen perſecutors were to be caſt down from their ſeats. Then the power was to be wreſted out of their hands. They were to be degraded and overthrown; many of them were to ſuffer great calamities and judgements; and the Chriſtians, whom they abhorred, were to triumph over them.

But, if we underſtand the cry to have been uttered at the commencement of this perſecution, every circumſtance will be clear and conſiſtent. It was certainly upon their heathen enemies that the vengeance was to be taken. It was from them that they had ſuffered ſo many cruelties; and to none but them could they be ſuppoſed to refer, when they requeſted that they might be avenged on thoſe that dwelt on the earth. But this vengeance was ſtill at the diſtance

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diſtance of ten years of affliction; during which their fellow-ſervants and brethren, who were to be killed as they were, ſhould be fulfilled; and that period may with great propriety be called *a little ſeaſon*, in compariſon of all that length of time to which it is here evidently oppoſed, in which oppreſſion and calamity had been their general lot.

Can we fail to admire then the wiſdom of inſpiration, that, while with one hand, as it were, it points directly at this awful period, the moſt diſtreſſing to the church that had hitherto appeared, with the other, it directs us to all thoſe long continued ſufferings which their heathen perſecutors had formerly inflicted upon them. In this way, it informs us what was the general ſtate of the church under that haughty

haughty tyranny of Rome. It explains the cauſe of thoſe terrible judgements which had already been poured down upon the empire; and ſhews, that the time for the deliverance of the ſaints was at no great diſtance. All this is done, in the moſt ſimple and admirable manner, by the ſingle expreſſion, *O Lord, how long*— and by intimating that they were to *reſt yet for a little ſeaſon.*

What a ſhocking picture does this prophecy exhibit of the deep depravity of the human heart; that a doctrine ſo ſublime and ſo benevolent as that which Chriſtianity teaches, ſhould be regarded with enmity and abhorrence; and that its humble and harmleſs votaries, breathing nothing but peace and love to men, ſhould be ſo unjuſtly and cruelly treated. This however is only an evidence of what the

ſcripture

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ſcripture has declared, that *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God:* and, though it may ſeem ſtrange to ſome, and perhaps unaccountable, that God ſhould permit the wicked to make ſuch ravages upon his church and people; yet he has wiſe and holy ends to anſwer by it. It is for the trial and triumph of their faith, that it may be found ever to praiſe, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt. It is likewiſe for the conviction of an unbelieving world, by ſhewing what the power of almighty grace can do. Who but muſt have been ſtruck with the conſtancy of thoſe holy martyrs, when they appeared riſing ſuperior to all their ſufferings, and ſhewing a fortitude, even in the moſt excruciating deaths, beyond that of the moſt celebrated heroes! who could but admire their amiable

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and elevated ſpirit, when viewing them in thoſe awful moments, wrapt up in the praiſes of God, and recommending the religion for which they ſuffered, in the moſt earneſt manner, to all around them, as of the laſt importance to their eternal intereſts! Such an aſtoniſhing phænomenon muſt have been well adapted to make men enquire into its cauſe; and in conſequence of this, there is every reaſon to ſuppoſe, that they would feel themſelves convinced and perſuaded of the truth. Indeed the frequent and ſevere perſecutions which took place after miracles had ceaſed, ſeem to have been intended as a ſuccedaneum to them; and experience has amply ſhewn, that they have been the means of gaining many converts to Chriſtianity. Well might it be ſaid then, that the blood of

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the martyrs was the ſeed of the church. Every drop of that precious blood that was unjuſtly and cruelly ſhed, may be conſidered as a grain of corn caſt into the ground, and ready to ſpring up into an abundant harveſt —But deplorable is the ſtate of thoſe who are given up to the commiſſion of ſuch atrocious wickedneſs: the blood of the ſaints calls loudly for vengeance on them; and, in the train of thoſe predictions, we have occaſion repeatedly to obſerve this vengeance executed in an exemplary and awful manner. It may indeed be delayed for a little, but it ſhall certainly at length overtake the wicked; for *the Lord knoweth how to reſerve the unjuſt to the day of judgement to be puniſhed* (a).

(a) The ingenious and learned Mede fixes the commencement

commencement of this ſeal to the year 268, when the fifteen years peſtilence was over; and carries it down to the end of the Diocletian perſecution. He underſtands the martyrs being required to reſt for a little ſeaſon, to intimate, that their cauſe was not to be avenged till the total overthrow of the empire under the trumpets. This, according to him, was accompliſhed in the year 542. But how 240 years ſhould be called a little ſeaſon, in compariſon of the former, to which it is nearly equal, it is not very eaſy to conceive. This objection is greatly increaſed by the interpretation of Waple, who lengthens out the *little ſeaſon*, till the time of God's laſt vengeance upon antichriſt, under the Vials. Durham underſtands this ſeal, as expreſſing no new matter at all, and as taking up no length of time; but as added to the former by way of explanation and comfort, in reference to the ſufferings of the ſaints under them. But it would certainly require very ſtrong reaſons to prove, contrary to the uniform character of all the other ſeals, and even of the trumpets and vials which ſucceed them, that this produced no new matter, and took up no time. This is a point, however, that the worthy author entirely paſſes over. Abbadie, while he interprets the viſion of the perſecution under Diocletian,

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differs from moſt expoſitors. He, indeed, underſtands the ſouls of the martyrs here, of their dead bodies, as ſome had done before him; but he ingeniouſly contends, that the white robes being given them, intimates the impreſſion of their innocence which was made upon the mind of Conſtantius; and that their being ordered to reſt for a little ſeaſon, denotes the abatement of the perſecution, from the reſignation of Diocletian and Maximian, when the empire was divided betwixt Conſtantius and Galerius, till the laſt victory of Conſtantine over Licinius, when palms were put into the hands of Chriſtians, in addition to their white robes, as an emblem, not only of their innocence, but of their triumph. But how it could be ſaid to the martyrs in general that they were *to reſt*, in the ſenſe of this interpreter, while the perſecution was ſtill going on with as much violence as ever, in one half of the empire at leaſt, and only abated in the other, does not appear. In order to have rendered this interpretation conſiſtent, it would have been neceſſary to have ſhewn, that this proſpect of reſt was only intimated to the martyrs in the weſtern parts of the empire. I conclude with the opinion of the learned Vitringa, who underſtands this prophecy, of the perſecutions of the Waldenſes and Albigenſes

Albigenſes, the Bohemian brethren, and the martyrs of the reformed church: the *white robes*, of God's vindicating the cauſe of theſe martyrs at the time of the reformation; and their *reſting for a little ſeaſon*, of their waiting with patience till that period.

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL.

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Ver. 12. *And I beheld when he had opened the ſixth ſeal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the ſun became as black as ſackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood:*

Ver. 13. *And the ſtars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree caſteth her untimely figs when ſhe is ſhaken of a mighty wind.*

Ver. 14. *And the heaven departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and iſland were moved out of their places.*

Ver. 15. *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and*

and every bond-man and every free-man, hid themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;

Ver. 16. *And ſaid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;*

Ver. 17. *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who ſhall be able to ſtand!*

The opening of this ſeal far exceeds that of any of the former, in the awful magnificence and ſublimity of the deſcription; a greater and more terrible event, therefore, muſt certainly be meant, than any that has hitherto been predicted. This indeed is ſo remarkably the caſe, that, did not the circumſtances of the prophecy forbid the interpretation, we ſhould naturally underſtand it of the diſſolution of the world, and

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and the end of all things. *There was a great earthquake; the ſun was darkened, and the moon put on the appearance of blood, the ſtars of heaven likewiſe fell to the earth.* Theſe appear to have been the effects of the earthquake, particularly the laſt, the convulſion being ſo great, that the ſtars themſelves ſeemed to be violently toſſed and ſhaken, as *a fig-tree is ſhaken by a mighty wind:* at laſt the heavenly canopy itſelf was removed and withdrawn, *as a ſcroll when it is rolled together.* Every mountain and iſland likewiſe were moved out of their places; and the wicked, great and ſmall, were filled with horror, as if the judgement were at hand. *They cried to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the*

the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand! It is certain however, that it cannot refer to the diſſolution of the world, or the end of all things; for another ſeal remains to be opened, diſcloſing poſterior events reſpecting the church, before that period arrives. Nor is it neceſſary ſo to underſtand the deſcription, as every one who is acquainted with prophetic language, muſt be ſenſible. An earthquake, according to that language, ſignifies the ſhaking and overturning of a political conſtitution and government: the ſun being darkened, and the moon turned into blood, denote diſtreſs and calamity to the rulers of the world: the ſtars of heaven falling to the earth, denotes, that the teachers of religion, eſpecially thoſe poſſeſſing political power and influence, are thrown from their ſta-

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tions: the heaven departing as a ſcroll rolled up, denotes an entire change in the political or religious ſyſtem: and ſo of the other circumſtances that are mentioned. In the regular ſeries of theſe ſeals then, we are come to an event of great importance and magnitude, and in which many of the ſtriking figures here made uſe of, may ſeem to receive their accompliſhment. I mean the overthrow of Rome pagan, and the introduction of Rome chriſtian, in the time of Conſtantine the Great. This was a time of great diſaſter and calamity to the heathen rulers. Maxentius, who had uſurped the imperial dignity, in fighting againſt Conſtantine, was drowned in the Tiber, with many of his men and ſome of his chief officers: his head was next day ſevered from his body, which had been

been found ſunk in the mud, a humiliating ſpectacle; and when Conſtantine made his public entry into Rome, he cauſed the head to be carried upon a pole before his army, to convince the people that the tyrant was dead, as they durſt not expreſs their rejoicing till that event was fully aſcertained. Maximin, likewiſe, who reigned in the eaſt, being defeated in battle at Heraclea by Licinius, threw off his purple robes, and croſſing the Boſphorus, fled in the diſguiſe of a ſlave to Nicomedia: thence, taking his wife and children along with him, and ſtill purſued by Licinius, he continued his flight through Cappadocia till he reached Tarſus, where, in a fit of diſpair, he put an end to his life by poiſon. After his death, his children and relations were publicly executed, his wife was drowned

in

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in the river Orontes, and all his miniſters and favourites ſhared in his ruin. At Antioch, Theotechnes a celebrated magician, and all his aſſociates were publicly put to death, after being obliged to diſcover the impoſtures with which they had deceived the people, and ſtirred them up againſt the Chriſtians. Candidianus, the ſon of Galerius, was murdered by order of Licinius. Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian, and widow of Galerius, hearing of his death, fled from Antioch with her mother Priſca, and wandered about in diſguiſe for fifteen months: they were at length diſcovered at Theſſalonica, and being apprehended, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the ſea. In this remarkable and awful manner, were the families of thoſe three cruel perſecutors of the church,

church, Diocletian, Galerius and Maximin, utterly cut off and deſtroyed.

Conſtantine likewiſe ſhut up the heathen temples, ſtripped them of their riches, their ornaments, and even of their idols; and ordered all the revenues belonging to them to be applied to uſeful purpoſes in civil life; in conſequence of which, not only were the heathen prieſts ruined, but the gods themſelves, the Pythian, and Sminthian Apollo, the mighty Pan, which, after the Perſian war, all the cities of Greece had conſecrated, with the Tripod of Delphos, and whatever blind antiquity had for ages worſhipped, were dragged publicly about the ſtreets, and either daſhed in pieces, or preſerved merely as elegant productions of art to adorn the palaces and public buildings. Thus, the pagan

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pagan heaven itſelf might be ſaid to have departed, and its luminaries to have fallen to the earth. The enemies of the church too, we have ſeen, and even thoſe of higheſt rank and authority, ſuffered awful diſaſters and calamities; to which the ſun becoming black as ſackcloth of hair, and the moon being turned into blood, may be ſuppoſed to refer. I am inclined however to think, that, though the prophecy certainly points to this event, it has not in it its full accompliſhment: it ſeems to look forward from the deſtruction of Rome pagan, to the parallel and much greater event, the deſtruction of Rome papal, in which Chriſtianity itſelf had been paganized; and in this ſingle prediction, I imagine it deſcribes them both. The ſmiting and darkening of the heavenly bodies,

dies, in the language of prophecy, denotes the fall of kingdoms and empires: now there was no ſuch fall happened when Rome became Chriſtian. The civil government continued the ſame as before; and, though, upon that occaſion, many great men ſuffered, as we have ſeen, as well as many of inferior rank, yet there is nothing in the hiſtory that can lead us to ſuppoſe that they imputed their ſufferings to the wrath of the Lamb. On the contrary, this happened in the common courſe of war; and they ſeem rather to have imputed them to the anger of their gods, for their neglecting to pay them their accuſtomed homage. But at the deſtruction of Rome papal, all theſe magnificent and awful figures receive their full accompliſhment. Then the ſtate of things, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, is entirely

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tirely changed: this agrees exactly to the great earthquake, and to the ſmiting and deſtroying of the heavenly bodies, and to the whole political heavens being removed. Then too, as we have every reaſon to ſuppoſe, perſons of every rank and deſcription ſhall be filled with terror and deſpair, on account of the awful judgements which will come upon them; and the prophetic language will be found by no means too ſtrong, when it repreſents the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man and free-man, as ſaying to the mountains and rocks, *fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* Then they cannot but know that their calamities proceed from this ſource.

The

The ſimiliarity of the deſcriptions likewiſe, chap. vi. 12. and xvi. 18. the laſt of which unqueſtionably foretels the fall of Rome antichriſtian, is very remarkable. In both caſes there was a great earthquake, though the laſt was greater than the firſt, the civil as well as the religious ſyſtem being then quite overturned; in both caſes the mountains and the iſlands are repreſented as removed, places of ſecurity and refuge for the wicked being taken away; which will be far more remarkable in the latter caſe than it was in the former. It is true that in the firſt, the wicked are repreſented ſaying to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from him that ſitteth on the throne; in the laſt, they are ſaid to blaſpheme God, becauſe of the plague of the hail: but theſe are by no means inconſiſt-

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ent with one another: the devils in the place of torment, which is a place of horror and deſpair, do not refrain from blaſpheming God.

Such then is the ſenſe in which I underſtand this remarkable paſſage. It is preciſely in the ſpirit of the double ſenſe of prophecy, as every one who has ſtudied that ſubject muſt be ſenſible, where the ſecondary meaning, is often the full and adequate accompliſhment. It preſerves the ſeries of predictions, by underſtanding it at firſt of the fall of Rome pagan; while, by ſuppoſing the ſpirit of prophecy to look forward to the parallel and more awful event, it gives the expreſſions their full and adequate import, which when they are reſtricted to the former, cannot exactly be made out. There ſeems likewiſe to be a particular propriety, when the riſe of

of that corrupt perſecuting power is about to be deſcribed, in giving the church the conſolation of an anticipating proſpect of his fall (a).

(a) Mede, Durham, Jurieu, Lowman, and others, underſtand this ſeal only of the change of religion in the Roman empire, under Conſtantine the Great, which, we have ſeen, does not come up to the full ſignificance of the emblems which are here employed. While the learned Vitringa underſtands it entirely of the deſtruction of papal tyranny and ſuperſtition, which is yet future; and thus, without a forced interpretation of the former ſeals turning them away from their natural objects, the ſeries of predictions is broken, and the ſixth ſeal made to ſtand at a vaſt diſtance from all the reſt. Forbeſius, again, underſtands it to be a deſcription of the calamities brought upon the Roman empire, by the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the Goths, Vandals, Alans, Perſians, Hunns, &c. not conſidering that the judgement would then fall upon the ſeat of the church, whereas, according

cording to this prophecy, it muſt have been upon her enemies, who are here repreſented as terrified at the wrath of the Lamb. Markius underſtands it of the judgement of the great day; the reaſons againſt which have been formerly ſtated.

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Ver. 1. *And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

Ver. 2. *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea;*

Ver. 3. *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.*

This

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This vision, every one must see, is of quite a different character from any of the former: it is interposed between the opening of the sixth and the seventh seal, and therefore we must look for its accomplishment at that period. It presages a time of severe trial and danger to the servants of God; intimated by *the four winds being let loose to hurt the earth, and the sea, and the trees:* at the same time it holds out a divine security which the saints shall enjoy in the midst of all this danger; denoted by their being sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God; and, what is very important and remarkable, these destructive winds are not allowed to blow till this divine security is given. It is of little consequence to enquire who these four angels are: they are plainly the ministers

miniſters of providence to reſtrain, for a time, the evils that were coming upon the world. It is of more importance to know who that other angel is, who is ſpoken of as *aſcending from the eaſt, and having the ſeal of the living God.* He muſt certainly be underſtood to be a divine perſon, from his office of ſealing the elect, which ſuppoſes the knowledge of the heart; and who elſe can he be but our Lord and Saviour himſelf? He is often repreſented in Scripture as an angel; and may properly be ſaid here to *aſcend from the eaſt*, as he took his riſe in Judea, which lay eaſt of the ſcene of this viſion: and though the office of ſealing the ſaints is aſſigned in ſcripture to the Holy Spirit, whom the learned Vitringa underſtands to be the angel here, yet, the Father himſelf is likewiſe ſaid

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ſaid to ſeal them (a), and therefore there is no reaſon why the Son may not ſeal them alſo. Beſides, the ſealing of the Spirit, as it is inward upon the heart, is here ſuppoſed to be done already, by their being *the ſervants of God*; whereas, this ſealing was performed upon their foreheads, and denotes more properly their open and firm profeſſion of pure Chriſtianity, in the midſt of the greateſt dangers, and their being kept through faith, by the power of God, from the corruptions and pollutions with which they were ſurrounded.

It remains now to enquire, what is the prophetical import of *the blowing of the four winds*, and what are the events in which this prophecy is fulfilled. The winds here

(a) 2 Cor. i. 21.

here certainly denote calamities, judgements, and evils, and therefore cannot be meant of the doctrines of the goſpel, as ſome underſtand them; on the contrary, we are here led to expect great commotions and dangers. When the four winds are let looſe at once to ſtruggle with one another, what dreadful confuſion do they produce! Here the claſſical reader will readily recollect Virgil's deſcription of the ſtorm which ſcattered Æneas's fleet, and deſtroyed ſo great a part of it (a). But the queſtion ſtill remains,

(a) Venti, velut agmine facto,
Qua data porta, ruunt, et terras turbine perflant.
Incubuere mari, totumque a ſedibus imis
Una Euruſque Notuſque ruunt, creberque procellis
Africus, et vaſtos voloent ad ſidera, fluctus.
Eripiunt ſubito nubes cælumque diemque
Teucrorum ex oculis: ponto nox incubat atra:
Intonuere poli, & crebris micat ignibus æther. 1. 83.

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what are the evils which are denoted by thoſe winds, when they were permitted to blow? Are they the errors and hereſies with which the church was ſoon after this rent and convulſed; ſuch as the Arian, and Photinian, Apollinarian and Macedonian hereſies? Or, are they the whole of the calamities which occurred through the whole of the Papal tyranny and ſuperſtition? Indeed there is every reaſon to underſtand them in this extenſive meaning. They were all dangerous and hurtful to the ſaints; but, amidſt them all, the ſaints were to be kept ſafe and entire; and accordingly, in the beginning of the xiv. chap. we ſee them appearing in full number, ſtanding with the Lamb on mount Sion, having the Father's name written on their foreheads; which muſt be the ſame thing with the

the ſeal here mentioned; for the Jewiſh ſeals had no figure, or image engraved on them, but only an inſcription or motto; beſides the diſcoveries of antiquarians, we have a ſeal with the inſcription upon it introduced, 2 Tim. ii. 19. on one ſide were theſe words, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," on the other, "Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity." There were an hundred and forty and four thouſand ſealed of all the tribes of Iſrael; a definite number, even the number of perfection, being put for an indefinite one; and the tribes of Iſrael being put for the true Iſrael of God. Among profeſſing Chriſtians, however, vaſt numbers died during that long period of evil. Theſe, in the tender mercies of God, were tranſlated to the world of bliſs and

perfection

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perfection above. Therefore the apoſtle records another viſion which he ſaw, for the conſolation of the ſaints.

Ver. 9. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

Ver. 10. *And cried with a loud voice, ſaying, Salvation to our God, which ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

Ver. 11. *And all the angels ſtood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beaſts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worſhipped God,*

Ver. 12. *Saying, Amen: Bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

While

While the apoſtle was thus ſurveying the vaſt ſociety of ſaints and angels in wonderful and delightful contemplation, one of the Elders, wiſhing to recal his attention to the palm-bearing multitude, aſked him, as he tells us, the following queſtions.

Ver. 13.—*What are theſe which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?*.

Ver. 14. *And* (ſays he) *I ſaid unto him, Sir, thou knoweſt. And he ſaid unto me, theſe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

Ver. 15. *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple: and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them.*

Ver. 16. *They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat.*

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Ver. 17. *For the Lamb, which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Though I will not deny that this deſcription may have a reference to the proſperity and glory of the church in the latter day, yet it certainly runs far too high to be ever fully verified in this world. What a poor ſenſe can be put upon theſe expreſſions, *they ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes:* What a poor ſenſe, I ſay, can be put upon theſe expreſſions, if we underſtand them of any thing leſs than the heavenly

heavenly happineſs and glory. It may be ſaid indeed, that this is the manner in which the proſperous ſtate of the church is deſcribed in the Old Teſtament prophecies, and therefore, it is not ſtrange that it ſhould be ſo deſcribed in the New. But who can ſhew that the ſpirit of prophecy in ancient times did not look beyond the earthly accompliſhment, to that ſuperior happineſs and glory which it will uſher in, and deſcribe them both at once? Beſides, this repreſentation of the glorious reward of the ſufferings of the ſaints, is fitly introduced here, that they may be ſupported by the faith of it under their greateſt trials, as knowing that the ſufferings of this preſent time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhould be revealed in them. And finally, when ſo underſtood, it makes the

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the ſeries of predictions to harmonize: we ſee, that notwithſtanding this vaſt multitude exalted to the heavenly manſions, the church on earth ſtill continued; new converts were raiſed up to fill their room, and preſerved in the dark night of apoſtacy and danger; and when the day of deliverance began to dawn, we ſee the church appearing in her integrity, even the ſame one hundred and forty and four thouſand ſtanding upon mount Sion, with the Lamb at their head (a).

(a) Commentators have taken very different views of this chapter, and underſtood it in very different ſenſes. Durham underſtands the prophecy of the winds which it contains, of the errors and hereſies which rent and convulſed the church in the fourth century, and not of outward calamities: and he gives this plauſible reaſon for his interpretation, that though ſaints are to be preſerved from ſpiritual calamities and evils, they are

are not to be preſerved from thoſe of a temporal nature. But why not admit along with theſe hereſies, the idolatries and pollutions of the church of Rome, from which they were certainly to be preſerved? The introduction of image worſhip, may be fitly repreſented by winds ſtriving, for it bred great commotions in the church for a conſiderable time.

The learned Vitringa underſtands it as a part of the ſixth ſeal; and with leſs probability than Durham, he underſtands the winds to be thoſe great commotions which cauſed the earthquake; and the ſealing of the ſervants of God, as denoting their ſecurity and preſervation amidſt thoſe awful judgements, by which myſtical Babylon ſhall be overthrown. Biſhop Newton likewiſe conſiders this viſion as a part of the ſixth ſeal, for a different reaſon, namely, that the ſeventh ſeal was not yet opened, as if no diſcovery could refer to that period till it was opened: he gives no higher meaning to the ſealing of the ſervants of God, than, that great numbers, both of Jews and Gentiles, were baptiſed into the Chriſtian faith, and made open profeſſion of the goſpel; and he childiſhly conceives that the ſealing on the forehead, refers to

that corruption of Chriſtian worſhip, the making the ſign of the croſs upon the forehead in the adminiſtration of baptiſm in the Romiſh and Engliſh churches, and at what they call confirmation, an ordinance of their own invention.

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

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Ver. 1. *And, when he had opened the ſeventh ſeal, there was ſilence in heaven about the ſpace of half an hour.*

Ver. 2. *And I ſaw the ſeven angels which ſtood before God; and to them were given ſeven trumpets.*

Ver. 3. *And another angel came, and ſtood at the altar, having a golden cenſer; and there was given unto him much incenſe, that he ſhould offer it with the prayers of all ſaints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

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Ver. 4. *And the ſmoke of the incenſe, which came with the prayers of the ſaints, aſcended up before God, out of the angel's hand.*

Ver. 5. *And the angel took the cenſer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and caſt it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

It is as great an error to look for too much in the emblems of prophecy, as for too little. The ingenious inventions of Mede, upon this occaſion, are too remarkable not to be taken notice of. He finds the prayers of all ſaints, here ſpoken of, to be the prayers of the martyrs, under the fifth ſeal, crying to God for vengeance; and the fire taken from the altar and caſt upon the earth, to denote the anſwer

ſwer to thoſe prayers, in the awful judgements which were to come upon their enemies, under the trumpets. Both theſe, I am afraid, are too fancifully deviſed, and the expreſſion, *prayers of all ſaints*, is unluckily too comprehenſive to be confined only to martyrs: likewiſe the notion, that the *ſilence in heaven for half an hour* alludes to the temple ſervice, when the people prayed ſilently without, during the time that the prieſt burned the incenſe in the ſanctuary, will not accord with the deſcription, becauſe, the ſilence for half an hour, ſeems to have been before the incenſe was given to the angel to offer. I therefore think we have a more ſure and ſufficiently important meaning, by underſtanding the great ſilence in heaven, of a ſolemn and ſignificant pauſe,

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pauſe, to rouſe and command attention to the awful ſcenes that were ſoon to be introduced; and which were quickly announced by *fire taken from the altar and caſt upon the earth*, which occaſioned *voices, and thunders, and lightening, and an earthquake*, the emblems of ſore judgements; and likewiſe by underſtanding the ſilence to denote a certain period of reſt and quiet ſtill remaining, before theſe awful judgements commenced. On the other hand, I think the learned Vitringa goes to the oppoſite extreme, in confining the ſeventh ſeal, to the ſilence in heaven for half on hour, which he underſtands of the peaceful ſtate of the church after the fall of antichriſt; and conſiders the trumpets as beginning a new ſeries of prophecy. Notwithſtanding there is certainly

not

not the ſmalleſt hint of a new ſeries, but every mark of a continuation of the former, as the connection of the paſſage plainly ſhews.

We ſhall therefore proceed to the interpretation of the circumſtances that were exhibited on ſounding the trumpets.

The

THE SOUNDING OF THE FIRST TRUMPET.

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Ver. 6. *And the ſeven angels which had the ſeven trumpets, prepared themſelves to ſound.*

Ver. 7. *The firſt angel ſounded* (a), *and there followed hail, and fire mingled with blood, and they were caſt upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green graſs was burnt up.*

The

(a) Among the Jews, trumpets were not only uſed at their ſolemn and joyful religious feſtivals, but likewiſe as the ſignal of war, and the call to go forth to battle: ſee 1 Cor. xiv. 8. The ſound of a trumpet, therefore, is properly employed in this prophecy, as the prelude of calamity, devaſtation and woe.

The ſeven angels, here ſpoken of, are not properly angels, but the miniſters and inſtruments of the divine judgements upon the earth.

The plague of the firſt trumpet, conſiſted in a terrible ſtorm of hail and lightning mingled with blood. Blood ſhowered down from heaven may appear a very unnatural, though, at the ſame time, it muſt be allowed to be a very ſignificant and awful emblem: but, not to mention that the prophetical images are not confined to what is natural, this deſcription is not ſo extravagant, as ſome may imagine. Showers, apparently of blood, are well atteſted to have fallen in different places; water has appeared to be turned into blood: and the reſearches of modern times have enabled us to explain the cauſe.

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The diligent Swammerdan relates, that, as he was ſitting one day in his cabinet, he heard a great rumour and alarm among the people. When he had enquired into the cauſe of it, he found it was occaſioned by the water of Leyden being turned, as they thought, into blood: but by an examination of it he found, that the change of colour was derived from the greeniſh red monoculus, a minute animal, found in it in great numbers: juſt as the luminous appearance of the ſea, by night, at certain times, has been lately diſcovered to be cauſed by the nereis noctiluca.

But, not to inſiſt on obſervations of this kind, no emblems can more ſtrongly repreſent the impetuous violence of a fierce and bloody enemy over-running and deſtroying a country, than thoſe which are here employed;

employed ; a ſtorm of hail and lightning which produces ſudden and great deſtruction. This mingled with blood, indicates great ſlaughter, as well as devaſtation. We have therefore a ſtriking accompliſhment of the prophecy of the firſt trumpet, in the irruptions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire, which happened at this period, and the deſtruction and miſery which they produced. But, as I conſider the firſt four trumpets to be a prophecy of the four remaining ſteps of the fall of the Roman empire, till its final extermination, I confine the firſt trumpet to the calamities which it ſuffered from Alaric. About the year 395, Alaric at the head of his native Goths and other barbarous people, by the inſtigation of Rufinus, the ambitious miniſter of Arcadius, who graſped

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ed at ſovereign power, laid waſte all Theſſaly, Pannonia, Macedonia, and Thrace; and entering into Greece, theſe barbarians committed the greateſt cruelties wherever they went, putting all to the ſword who attempted the ſmalleſt reſiſtance, and ſending the whole wealth of the rich provinces, and even the women and children who fell into their hands, to the diſtant countries from whence they came. They likewiſe laid waſte the whole country between the Adriatic and the Euxine ſea; the wretched inhabitants, to eſcape death or captivity, hiding themſelves in dens and caves of the earth. Some years after this, there were likewiſe dreadful earthquakes in moſt provinces of the eaſt: the cities of Conſtantinople and Chalcedon were violently ſhaken; many houſes were burnt with

with lightning; and the ſea, overflowing its banks, laid whole provinces under water.

In the year 400, the Goths, who had been driven out of Greece by Stilicho, ruſhed into Italy under their general Alaric, and Radagaiſus king of the Hunns, and ravaged the country to a wide extent. Their ſtay in Italy at this time, however, was not long; but, two years after, Alaric invaded that country anew, and finding no army to oppoſe him, he laid waſte the provinces of Venetia and Liguria, and made imperial Rome itſelf to tremble. But Stilicho marching his troops unexpectedly into Rhætia, gave him battle at Pollentia, and reduced him to ſuch difficulties as obliged him to ſue for peace.

In the year 404, the barbarous nations again invaded Italy, led on by

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by Radagaiſus, king of the Hunns. Their number was very great; ſome writers reckoning it not leſs than four hundred thouſand. The lords who commanded them, are ſaid by a contemporary writer, to have been not leſs than twelve hundred. The news of their approach made all Italy and Rome to tremble. Stilicho, however, fell upon them with his troops unexpectedly, and gained a complete victory; an hundred thouſand of the enemy being ſlain in battle: the remainder he afterwards beſieged among the mountains of Feſulæ, to which they had fled, and reduced them to ſuch ſtraits, that Radagaiſus their leader, in attempting to make his eſcape, fell into Stilicho's hands, and was put to death: his men, deſerted by their leader, and deſtitute of proviſions, ſunk into deſpondency, and gave

gave themſelves up to the Romans in ſuch numbers, that they were ſold like beaſts at a crown a head; but being infected with diſeaſe, in conſequence of the famine which they endured in the mountains, they all died in the courſe of a few days.

The empire, however, obtained but a very temporary relief from calamity, even by this extraordinary victory; for, at the end of the year 406, the Alans, the Vandals, and the Suevi, broke into Gaul, and committed dreadful ravages: they carried Mentz by ſtorm, deſtroyed the city, and maſſacred many thouſands of the inhabitants. They likewiſe took, and laid in aſhes, Worms, Straſburg and Spires; and over-ran and waſted the whole country, from the Alps to the Pyrenees, and from the Rhine to the Ocean.

In

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In the mean time, the Roman army in Britain revolted, and chose Constantine, a private soldier, to be emperor; who, passing over into Gaul, soon made himself master of all that country, and was at last acknowledged by Honorius as his colleague.

Not long after, Italy was again alarmed by Alaric and his barbarians; and Rome itself was so closely besieged, that a famine and pestilence began to reign in the city, by which the inhabitants were reduced to the utmost extremity, and at last obliged to send out deputies to treat with Alaric, who, for a great price, agreed to raise the siege. He retired with his army to Hetruria, from thence, after a short stay, the emperor being unwilling to fulfil the treaty, he returned to Rome, and blocked it up a second time. Having made

made himſelf maſter of the caſtle at the mouth of the Tiber, where all the public proviſions were lodged, the gates of the city were immediately thrown open to him. He obliged the inhabitants to renounce their allegiance to Honorius, and to acknowledge Attalas, prefect of the city, for emperor.

In the year 410, a dreadful famine raged in Italy: the people, for want of bread, were reduced to the neceſſity of feeding upon cheſnuts, and the famine ſtill increaſing, human fleſh was publicly ſold, and even mothers were ſaid to have devoured their own offspring.

In the mean time, Alaric, irritated by a new provocation, appeared again before the imperial city, blocaded it on every ſide, and at laſt carried it by aſſault. The ſoldiers were allowed to plunder the

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inhabitants, but were ſtrictly enjoined to ſpare their lives, excepting thoſe whom they found in arms; and above all, not to pollute the churches, by ſhedding the blood of thoſe who had fled to them for refuge.

Thus, on the 24th of Auguſt, in the year 410, that proud and lofty city, which had triumphed over ſo many nations, and extended its dominions over all the known world, was taken by a barbarian, who had ſcarcely a foot of ground which he could call his own; and having enriched herſelf, for many ages, with the ſpoils of the plundered nations, ſhe ſuffered in her turn the ſame calamities which ſhe had ſo often brought upon others. After plundering the city for ſeveral days, the ſoldiers ſet it on fire, and reduced it to a heap of aſhes; many of the inhabitants

inhabitants likewiſe were murdered, notwithſtanding the orders of the general; and a dreadful ſtorm of thunder and lightning falling upon the city, completed its ruin and increaſed the horror of the ſcene.

How apt and awful an accompliſhment have we then, in this hiſtory, of the prophetical emblems which are here made uſe of! As a proof that they expreſs ſuch events as thoſe to which we have applied them, we may obſerve, that the ancient prophets deſcribe ſimilar calamities by the very ſame emblems. Thus Iſaiah deſcribes the invaſion of Iſrael by the king of Aſſyria, chap. xxix. 6. *Behold the Lord hath a mighty and ſtrong one, which as a tempeſt of hail and deſtroying ſtorm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, ſhall caſt*

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caſt down to the earth with the hand: and Ezek. chap. xiii. 13. propheſying againſt the ill tempered wall of peace which the falſe prophets had raiſed; *Thus ſaith the Lord God, I will even rent it with a ſtorm of wind in my fury, and there ſhall be an overflowing ſhower in mine anger, and great hail-ſtones in my fury to conſume it;* that is to ſay, this wall of peace ſhall be broken down by a powerful and furious enemy, who, like a violent ſtorm, ſhall carry all before them. And thus, *the hail and the fire mingled with blood*, which followed the ſounding of the firſt trumpet, aptly denote the dreadful calamities which took place in that period which we have now been reviewing; while *the third part of the trees being burnt up, and all the green graſs*, indicates the deſtruction which came upon all ranks,

ranks, high and low; trees denoting perſons of high rank, and the graſs the common people (a).

(a) Forbeſius underſtands the judgement announced by this trumpet, to be upon the church; and the fire, to be the fire of contention, producing the frigid hail of contracted affections, and the cold rains of ſelf-love. The blood mingled with theſe, he takes to be, either the Gentile perſecutions, or the cruel contention under Conſtans, Conſtantius, and Valens.

Durham underſtands this trumpet, of the impious hereſy of Arius, which was both very peſtilent in itſelf, and ſtained far and wide with the perſecution of the orthodox. Mede, Biſhop Newton, Jurieu, and others, underſtand it, to be a judgement upon the empire, as above. The learned Vitringa explains it of diſeaſe, famine, and ſword, coming upon the empire, eſpecially between the times of Trajan and Gallienus; but including likewiſe any other periods at which they may have happened; and thus making the accompliſhment of prophecy looſe and uncertain. Several other commentators think that the occurrences in the Roman empire, are too mean an object for the ſpirit of prophecy to pay ſo great attention

attention to in this and the preceding viſions; not conſidering that this great empire was the ſubject of prophecy from early times; as we ſee in the book of Daniel; and again, in after times, in the writings of the Apoſtle Paul, to whom it was declared, " that the man of ſin ſhould not be revealed, till it, (*i. e.* the Roman empire,) ſhould be taken out of the way." How reaſonable then to ſuppoſe, that a detail of his riſe and progreſs, ſhould be preceded by a deſcription of the various ſteps by which that empire ſhould be brought down to deſtruction.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE SECOND TRUMPET.

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Ver. 8. *And the ſecond angel ſounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was caſt into the ſea, and the third part of the ſea became blood:*

Ver. 9. *And the third part of the creatures which were in the ſea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ſhips were deſtroyed.*

A mountain is a natural emblem of ſtrength; a mountain in motion denotes ſtrength coming againſt thoſe towards whom it is directed; and a burning mountain in motion is one of the moſt awful emblems of deſtruction that can well be conceived. This

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This burning mountain *was caſt into the ſea;* that is, among the people; as the ſea, in the language of prophecy, denotes. *It turned the waters into blood;* denoting great ſlaughter: *and killed the third part of the creatures that were in the ſea, and had life, and deſtroyed the third part of the ſhips;* meaning, that the riches and ſtrength of the empire were greatly injured by it.

This emblem, I conceive, to have been fully verified in Genſeric, king of the Vandals, when, at the deſire of the Empreſs Eudoxia, to revenge the death of her huſband, he came over with a great fleet from Africa, having 300,000 men on board, invaded Italy, and took and pillaged Rome itſelf. He and his people remained fourteen days in the city, not only plundering private houſes, but ſtripping the public buildings of

of their precious ornaments, and even the churches of their ſacred veſſels. They took a vaſt number of captives: Genſeric himſelf forced the imperial palace, and ſeizing on the treaſure and rich furniture with which it was ſtored, put them on board a veſſel to be carried to Africa. The Empreſs Eudoxia and her two daughters, were compelled to follow the conqueror.

Having thus ſpoiled the city of all its wealth and valuable ornaments, among which are ſaid to have been the ſacred veſſels which Titus had formerly taken out of the Temple of Jeruſalem, he ſet ſail, and returned with his fleet to Africa. The ſucceſsful attempts which had now been repeatedly made upon Italy and Rome, and the weakneſs with which they had

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been oppoſed, invited the barbarous nations to make freſh inroads upon the empire. Theſe were evils which Genſeric drew in his train, and therefore are to be taken into the accompliſhment of the prophecy which we are now explaining. Let us turn our eyes then, for a moment, upon theſe dreadful calamities.

About this time, the Burgundians, who had been removed from the banks of the Rhine, and had long dwelt among the mountains of Savoy, ſeized upon the ſouth of Gaul, and made themſelves maſters of Lyons The Viſigoths likewiſe, under Theodoric their king, having almoſt wholly reduced Gallicia, entered Luſitania, ſubdued ſeveral of its cities, and even Merida itſelf, the metropolis. Returning to Gallicia, they committed great cruelties in the

the city of Aſtorga, into which they had been admitted in a friendly manner; they plundered and murdered moſt of the inhabitants, ſet fire to the city, and carried into captivity all whoſe lives they had ſpared, both clergy and people.

In the year 459, an army of Viſigoths, ſent by Theodoric into Spain, waſted the province of Bœtica; while the Suevi over-ran Gallicia upon the ſouth, putting all the inhabitants to the ſword.

The ſame year, the city of Antioch in the eaſt, was almoſt utterly ruined by an earthquake.

The year following, the Roman fleet was attacked by the Vandals in the bay of Alicant, with ſuch ſucceſs, that moſt of the ſhips were taken, and carried in triumph to Africa.

Not

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Not long after this, Genſeric gained another ſignal victory over the Roman fleet, on the ſhores of Africa. He burnt many of their ſhips, took ſeveral more, ſunk others, and obliged the reſt to ſave themſelves by flight.

By theſe diſaſtrous events, the empire was ſo waſted and weakened, that it was now faſt hurrying on to its fall. And the whole of the period now under conſideration, was a ſeries of ſuch ſevere, ſuch awful, ſuch general calamity, as comes up in every reſpect to the ſtrong emblematical deſcription by which it is here repreſented (a).

(a) Biſhop Newton underſtands the events which accompanied the ſounding of this trumpet, to repreſent thoſe calamities which were produced by the conqueſts of Attila, and his incurſions into

into the empire. Hence, from the order of events, he is obliged to interpret thoſe which followed the next trumpet, with no propriety, of Genſeric king of the Vandals.

Durham explains this of the lofty ambition of eccleſiaſtics, and their hot contentions about the primacy, after the council of Nice.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE THIRD TRUMPET.

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Ver. 10. *And the third angel founded, and there fell a great ſtar from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:*

Ver. 11. *And the name of the ſtar is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, becauſe they were made bitter.*

I cannot think, with the learned and ingenious Mede, that the circumſtance which attended the founding of this trumpet, ſignified the depoſition or degradation of Auguſtulus,

guſtulus, whom he ſuppoſes to be repreſented by the great ſtar which fell from heaven. Upon this ſuppoſition, no good account can be given of its falling *upon the third part of the fountains of waters*, or, *of men dying of the waters*, becauſe they were made bitter. That interpreter himſelf ſeems ſo ſenſible of this, that he does not attempt any explanation of that circumſtance, and thereby leaves the mind of the reader quite unſatisfied. Neither can I think with Biſhop Newton, that this emblematical repreſentation has a reference to Genſeric, king of the Vandals; for with no propriety can he be repreſented by *a ſtar falling from the* imperial *heaven*, as he never belonged to it. But if we underſtand it of Ricimer, and of the miſchiefs which he did to the empire, we ſhall find, I preſume, a very

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very apt and adequate accompliſhment of the whole of the deſcription. This Ricimer was a very extraordinary character. Though he ſeems to have been of Gothic extraction, he ſerved from his youth in the Roman armies, and acquired ſuch reputation for his warlike achievements, that at length he was raiſed to the higheſt dignities; being made commander in chief of all the Roman forces in the weſt, patrician, and ſon-in-law to the emperor. But his ambition was unbounded and daring; he preſumed to create and depoſe emperors at his pleaſure; and, excluded by birth from aſſuming the purple himſelf, he delighted in ſhewing that he could embroil thoſe who wore it. Impelled by the irreſiſtable force of his ambition, he murdered four emperors; three of whom had been raiſed

raiſed by himſelf to the throne. At laſt, elated with his victory over Genſeric, whom he had utterly defeated at ſea, upon the ſhores of Corſica, and afraid of the emperor Anthemius, whom he had raiſed to the crown in oppoſition to the demands of Genſeric, he openly revolted, and at the head of the barbarians in the Roman ſervice, beſieged Rome, where the emperor then was. The citizens, notwithſtanding the famine and plague which ſorely afflicted them, made a vigorous reſiſtance, expecting ſuccours out of Gaul under the command of Bilimer, who haſtened to their relief. Bilimer at length arrived with a conſiderable army, but was totally defeated by Ricimer, who, encouraged by the victory he had obtained, preſſed the ſiege more ſtrenuouſly, till at laſt, entering by a

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breach into the city, he waſted it with no leſs fury than Alaric or Genſeric had done, allowing his men not only to plunder, but to commit all manner of cruelties. He cauſed Anthemius his father-in-law to be put to death, and Olybrius to be proclaimed emperor in his room.

Here then we have a character in whom the ſtriking emblems that attended the ſounding of this trumpet, ſeem to be completely realized. By the high rank and authority which he held in the empire, he may be conſidered as a ſtar in the imperial heavens; by his revolt, he appears as a ſtar ſhooting out of its place: he is properly called *wormwood* on account of the bitter ſufferings which he occaſioned: and, although Italy and Rome were the chief

chief ſcene of his operations, yet, in his revolt he may be ſaid to have *fallen upon the rivers, and fountains of water*, as it was a great encouragement to the depredations and cruelties of the barbarians, in the provinces, *by which their waters were made bitter, and many died.* His example, likewiſe, excited the revolt of the other barbarians in the Roman ſervice, who choſe Odoacer for their leader. By him, Auguſtulus the laſt emperor was ſtripped of the imperial dignity, and put into a ſtate of confinement. After this, he cauſed himſelf to be proclaimed king of Italy, and thus put an end to the very name of empire in the weſt.

Thus, Italy and its proud metropolis, which, for ſo many ages, had given law to the world, was enſlaved

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enſlaved by an obſcure barbarian, whoſe family, country, and nation, are not certainly known.

This revolution happened in the year 476.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

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Ver. 12. *And the fourth angel ſounded, and the third part of the ſun was ſmitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the ſtars; ſo as the third part of them was darkened, and the day ſhone not for a third part of it, and the night likewiſe.*

The former trumpet brought us to the death of Ricimer, and the degradation of Auguſtulus. This announces the total extinction of the Roman Government: an event which is expreſſed, by *a third part of the ſun being ſmitten, and a third part of the moon, and a third part of the ſtars;*

or,

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or, in other words, the ſun, moon, and ſtars being ſmitten, in a third part of the world: meaning the Roman empire. The ſmiting and darkening of the heavenly bodies, ſignifies, in the language of prophecy, the falling of kingdoms, and the deſtruction of governments: thus, Ezekiel deſcribes the deſtruction of the kingdom of Egypt, chap. xxxii. 7, 8.

This extinction of the Roman government did not happen till the deſtruction of the kingdom of the Oſtrogoths in Italy, in the year 556: after which, that country was governed with an abſolute ſway, by the lieutenants of the Emperor of the eaſt. The firſt of theſe was Longinus, ſent thither by the emperor Juſtin 2d, who changed the whole form of government, aboliſhed the ſenate, the conſuls, and all

all the former magiſtrates, and appointed a new governor in every city; over all of whom he preſided under the title of Exarch of Ravenna, the place where he had his reſidence.

Thus, the Roman Government was finally deſtroyed, its lights were extinguiſhed, Rome itſelf was degraded to a poor dukedom, and even made tributary to Ravenna, which ſhe formerly had governed (a).

Ver.

(a) Durham interprets this fourth trumpet, of the great decline of learning, and learned men, in the church, in the ſixth century; and of the darkneſs of error, when the ancient hereſies were revived, particularly the Eutychian, which the emperor Anaſtaſius approved and cheriſhed: then too, primitive zeal and piety were greatly eclipſed. Vitringa likewiſe refers it chiefly to the church; but he fixes the period to which it belongs towards the cloſe of the fourth century, between the riſe of arianiſm, and the ſpoiling of the

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Ver. 13. *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midſt of heaven, ſaying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth, by reaſon of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to ſound.*

This viſion is an awful notice to the Roman church and people, now fallen into great corruption, of the much heavier judgements, which their increaſing wickedneſs was yet to bring down upon their guilty heads, under the three trumpets which were yet to ſound.

THE

the empire by the Goths: this he ſeems to have done, chiefly with a view to interpret the next trumpet of the irruptions of that people, and the calamities they produced. At this time, however, he thinks the majeſty of the empire was degraded; and the lights of the church, the patriarchs and the biſhops, figured by the moon and the ſtars, were obſcured by ignorance and corruption.

THE SOUNDING OF THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

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Ver. 1. *And the fifth angel ſounded, and I ſaw a ſtar fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomleſs pit.*

Ver. 2. *And he opened the bottomleſs pit; and there aroſe a ſmoke out of the pit, as the ſmoke of a great furnace; and the ſun and the air were darkened by reaſon of the ſmoke of the pit.*

Ver. 3. *And there came out of the ſmoke locuſts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the ſcorpions of the earth have power.*

Ver. 4. *And it was commanded them that they ſhould not hurt the graſs of the*

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earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Ver. 5. *And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.*

Ver. 6. *and in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

Ver. 7. *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads, were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.*

Ver. 8. *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*

Ver. 9. *And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of*

of their wings was as the ſound of chariots of many horſes running to battle.

Ver. 10. *And they had tails like unto ſcorpions, and there were ſtings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.*

Ver. 11. *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomleſs pit, whoſe name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he hath his name Apollyon.*

Ver. 12. *One woe is paſt; and behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

Commentators have conſidered this viſion as particularly obſcure, and difficult of interpretation: yet, it ſeems to receive a very probable meaning, and a very adequate accompliſhment, when it is underſtood of the inroads of the Saracens into the Roman empire; and of the dreadful

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dreadful devaſtation which they produced. *The ſtar falling from heaven* will not, indeed, apply to Mahomet, as he never was a teacher, either in the heaven of the church, or of the empire. But why may we not underſtand it of the old ſerpent himſelf, who was once in heaven, and fell from it by his apoſtaſy? He is fitly repreſented as a *ſtar that had fallen from heaven;* and when the great Lord of all, is pleaſed to permit it, has with great propriety, *the key of the bottomleſs pit given to him*, to let forth his emiſſaries upon the earth. *The ſmoke that roſe out of the pit*, denotes the dark deluſion of Mahometaniſm which then aroſe, and which, by the groſſneſs of its errors, darkened the ſun and the air. *The locuſts that came out of the ſmoke*, were the vaſt legions of Saracens, who were infected with

with that deluſion, and who had power given them to produce great deſtruction in the empire. Their being commanded, *not to hurt the graſs of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree*, myſtically ſignifying neither ſmall nor great, probably refers to the orders of their leaders, who uſed to give them inſtructions of this kind; which affords an internal proof, that the prophecy belongs to them. Their *tormenting men for five months*, alludes to the length of their warlike campaigns, which were not commonly beyond that period; another internal evidence that this is the true application of the prophecy: and the miſery to which they reduced their numberleſs captives, made *men weary of their lives, and to ſeek death when they could not find it. The crowns of gold which they had on their heads*, denote their turbans

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turbans adorned with gold; *and their hair as the hair of women*, refers to the long hair which that people delighted to wear, and which they plaitted, and ornamented, in various ways. *The ſtings in their tails*, may be referred, either to their barbarities, and the devaſtation which they every where left behind them; or, to the poiſon of their doctrine, which they carried along with them, wherever they went. *The king whom they had over them*, can be no other than the old ſerpent, the deſtroying angel, who releaſed them from the pit; as appears from his very names, *Abaddon*, and *Apollyon*, which ſignify a *Deſtroyer*; a proof that our interpretation of *the ſtar that fell from heaven*, is juſt. When all theſe circumſtances are conſidered, it ſeems rather ſurpriſing, that commentators ſhould have found this

this prophecy ſo difficult of application; as there are ſcarcely any of the prophecies of this book, that have been more minutely fulfilled. It likewiſe agrees exactly to the order of time in which the ſeveral viſions are arranged; for it was in the year 606, that Mahomet began to aſſume the character of a prophet. His flight from Mecca to Medina, from whence the Hegira is computed, was in the year 622. Then he announced to his diſciples, that his religion was to be propagated by fire and ſword. Accordingly, the year following, he ſet the example of this, in robbing and plundering all who would not ſubmit to him, and embrace his religion. His firſt adventure, was his attacking and beating the traders of Mecca, though guarded by a thouſand men. In his perpetual wars, he comforted

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comforted the friends of thoſe who had fallen in battle, by aſſuring them, that, as the time of life was determined by God, they died no ſooner than they muſt otherwiſe have done: and moreover, as they died fighting for the faith, the crown of martyrdom, and the joys of paradiſe, would be their everlaſting and diſtinguiſhed recompenſe.

At laſt, about the year 631, this arch-impoſtor died, having taken the cities of Mecca and Medina, and ſubdued almoſt the whole of Arabia: thus eſtabliſhing a new religion and a new empire, with a more rapid and extenſive progreſs, than, had ever, till then, been known.

After his death, the Saracens became the ſcourge and depredators of Aſia, Africa, and Europe. They took Damaſcus; reduced Egypt and Syria;

Syria; beſieged and took Jeruſalem; laid waſte Armenia, and conquered Africa. But they were chiefly deſtructive in their incurſions into the Roman empire.

The hiſtory of theſe, however, would require a much larger detail than can be inſerted here. Let it therefore ſuffice, in general, to obſerve, that they not only left the inhabitants in great miſery, depriving them of their property and means of ſubſiſtence, but they ſometimes even tortured on the rack, thoſe whoſe lives they had ſpared.

Well then might the torment which they inflicted, be compared in this prophecy to *the torment of a ſcorpion when he ſtriketh a man.*

We are told, v. 12. *that one woe is paſt*, in the accompliſhment of the laſt trumpet, but that *two more*

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woes come hereafter meaning, in the two remaining trumpets that were to ſound (a).

(a) The learned Vitringa underſtands this trumpet, of the irruptions of the Goths, under Alaric and Ataulphus, which, by the order of theſe prophecies, obliges him to go into a very unnatural and forced interpretation of ſeveral of the former, without poſſeſſing any ſuperior advantage to recommend it. Mr. Durham, again, explains the *locuſts*, of the corrupt and deſtructive monks, and their *king*, of antichriſt; not conſidering, that, as the judgement of this trumpet fell chiefly upon idolaters, and thoſe that were ſunk in ſuperſtition and corruption, it is not likely, that he or his inſtruments would torment perſons of this deſcription. Cluverus, following the ancients, underſtands this trumpet, of heretics and their falſe doctrine: thus giving the emblem a meaning which is quite unknown in ſcripture; *locuſts* being uſed there only to ſignify deſtroying armies; and the emblem is certainly very apt, whether we conſider their vaſt numbers, the ſwiftneſs of their progreſs, or the devaſtation which they produce; the land where-

ever

ever they come, though as the garden of Eden before them, being as a barren wilderneſs behind. It is an amazing inſtance of the power of God, and very humiliating to human pride, that he can make ſo weak and contemptible a creature, an inſtrument of deſtruction to man. This indeed is often effected by means even of the ſmalleſt of the animal creation. The celebrated Linnæus concludes an eſſay upon inſects with this remark; "Theſe are the armies of the Moſt High, to puniſh diſobedient nations. Every band has its orders to fulfil, in the diſtribution of reward and puniſhment. If he decree to chaſtize mankind, a ſingle ſpecies of theſe animals is multiplied as the ſand of the ſea, who perform their divine commiſſion. Is the graſs of the earth to be cut off? Many legions of the Phalæna Graminis are at hand; one kind deſtroys corn, another devours our pot herbs, another our cheeſe and our meal, another our fleſh meat, another our clothes, another the ribs of ſhips. But who can enumerate their multiplied tribes? The Supreme Diſpoſer of all things, gives his command to thoſe minute animalcules, the Sirones, and the whole man becomes one loathſome contagion. Not to mention thoſe miniſters of diſeaſe and death which bring down upon us the plague, the ſmall-pox, the ſpotted fever, and other

infectious,

infectious, and ſpreading diſorders." From theſe obſervations we may ſee with what propriety any, even of the meaneſt of the animal creation, may be employed as emblems of a deſtroying army: but of all the tribes, none could be more fitly choſen than the locuſt, both from the qualities formerly mentioned, and from its martial appearance in making its inroads, and from the armour, both offenſive and defenſive, with which it is furniſhed, its body being covered with a kind of coat of mail, and its limbs armed with ſaws.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

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Ver. 13. *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

Ver. 14. *Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*

Ver. 15. *And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.*

Ver. 16. *And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

Ver.

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Ver. 17. *And thus I ſaw the horſes in the viſion, and them that ſat on them, having breaſtplates of fire, and of jacinct, and brimſtone: and the heads of the horſes were as the heads of lions: and out of their mouths iſſued fire, and ſmoke, and brimſtone.*

Ver. 18. *By theſe three was the third part of mankind killed, by the fire, and by the ſmoke, and by the brimſtone, which iſſued out of their mouths.*

Ver. 19. *For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto ſerpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*

Ver. 20 *And the reſt of the men which were not killed by theſe plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they ſhould not worſhip devils, and idols of gold, and ſilver, and braſs, and ſtone, and of wood: which neither can ſee, nor hear, nor walk:*

Ver.

Ver. 21. *Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their ſorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

The prophecy of this trumpet has received ſo exact an accompliſhment, in the incurſions of the Turks into the empire, and the ravages which they committed, that I think it not only unneceſſary, but improper to ſeek for another. *The four angels*, denote the four kingdoms, or governments, into which the Turks were divided, when they firſt croſſed the Euphrates, and invaded the neighbouring regions of Aſia and Syria: or, perhaps, more ſtrictly, the kings, or princes who preſided over them. Theſe ſeveral governments bordered on the Euphrates; one ſeated at Bagdad, another at Damaſcus, the third at Aleppo, and the fourth at Iconium. They were

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were reſtrained from extending their conqueſts to any diſtance, which the prophecy expreſſes, by *the angels being bound in the river Euphrates*. The reſtraint was impoſed on them for a conſiderable time, by the arms of Tamerlane the Tartar conqueror; ſtill longer, by their own civil wars; and by the Cruſaders, or, as Mede pleaſantly calls them, the Chriſtian Argonauts, who in their expedition to Jeruſalem, having vanquiſhed Soliman, Sultan of the Turks, drove them back to the Euphrates (a).

They

(a) The whole period of this reſtraint, the prophecy expreſſes, by *an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*; which Mede, and others, underſtand of the time which was limited for the Turkiſh conqueſts; but which is more naturally interpreted of the hour, and day, and month, and year, when they were permitted to carry devaſtation and miſery into the ſurrounding countries.

They were at that time formed into one great government, known ſince by the name of the Ottoman empire: ſome account of which, and of its conqueſts here referred to, I ſhall give in the words of the celebrated hiſtorian, of the decline and fall of the Roman empire. " The Ottoman empire," ſays he (*), " began

tries. Therefore, they are ſaid to have been prepared unto the hour, and day, and month, and year, ὁι ἡτοιμασμενοι εις την ωραν κ. τ. λ. meaning the preciſe time when they were to be looſed, or allowed to go forth. This ſhews us how the armies of the princes of this world, are prepared of God, to accompliſh the ends of his providence, and are entirely under his direction and controul. How ſecure and happy then, are the people whoſe God is the Lord! The greateſt power upon earth ſhall not be able to hurt them. No power upon earth, ever ſent forth ſuch armies of cavalry, as the Turks have done, yet they could not ſtir one foot till *the angel* was ſent to looſe them.

(*) Chap. lxiv.

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" began under the Caliph Othman, about the year 1299. The circumſtances of the time and place were propitious to his independence and ſucceſs. The Seljukian dynaſty was no more; and the diſtance and decline of the Mogul khans, ſoon enfranchiſed him from the controul of a ſuperior. He was ſituated on the verge of the Greek empire: the Koran ſanctified his holy war againſt the infidels; and their political errors unlocked the paſſes of Mount Olympus, and invited him to deſcend into the plains of Bithynia.

" In the year 1299, Othman firſt invaded the territory of Nicomedia. The annals of the 27th year of his reign, exhibited a repetition of the ſame inroads; and his hereditary troops were multiplied in each campaign, by the acceſſion of captives and

and volunteers. Pruſa ſurrendered, in his old age, to the arms of his ſon Orchan.

"All the troops of Othman conſiſted of Turkman cavalry; who ſerved without pay, and fought without diſcipline: but a regular body of infantry was firſt eſtabliſhed and trained by the prudence of his ſon. He likewiſe formed a train of battering engines for the uſe of ſieges; and the firſt ſucceſsful experiment was made on the cities of Nice and Nicomedia. He vanquiſhed and wounded the emperor Andronicus the younger; and he ſubdued the whole province, or kingdom, of Bithynia, as far as the ſhores of the Boſphorus and Helleſpont. The maritime country, from the Propontis to the Mæander and the Iſle of Rhodes, was finally loſt about the 30th year of Andronicus the elder.

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elder. The captivity, or ruin, of the ſeven churches of Aſia, was conſummated; and the barbarous lords of Ionia and Lydia, ſtill trample on the monuments of claſſic and Chriſtian antiquity. In the loſs of Epheſus, the Chriſtians deplored the fall of the firſt angel, the extinction of the firſt candleſtick, of the Revelation: the deſolation is complete; and the temple of Diana, or the church of Mary, will equally elude the ſearch of the curious traveller. The circus and the three ſtately theatres of Laodicea, are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardis is reduced to a miſerable village; the God of Mahomet is invoked in the moſques of Thyatira and Pergamus; and the populouſneſs of Smyrna is ſupported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians.

Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been ſaved. Encompaſſed on all ſides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourſcore years; and at laſt capitulated with the proudeſt of the Ottomans. In the year 1341 the Turks firſt entered Europe: and in the reign of Amurath I. in 1360, their conqueſts were rapid and extenſive. That victorious prince ſubdued, without reſiſtance, the whole province of Thrace, from the Helleſpont to the Hæmus, and the verge of the capital. The Sclavonian nations ſubmitted to his power. But after the battle of Caſſova, when walking over the field in all the pride of victory, a Servian ſoldier ſtarted from the croud of dead bodies, and Amurath was pierced in the belly with a mortal wound.

"His

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" His ſon, Bajazet I. invaded, with impartial ambition, the Chriſtian and Mahometan princes of Europe and Aſia. Whatever yet adhered to the Greek empire, in Thrace, Macedonia, and Theſſaly, acknowledged a Turkiſh maſter. In the battle of Nicopolis in 1396, Bajazet defeated a confederate army, under Sigiſmond the Hungarian king, conſiſting of an hundred thouſand Chriſtians, who had proudly boaſted, that if the ſky ſhould fall they could uphold it on their lances. The far greater part were ſlain, or driven into the Danube: and Sigiſmond, eſcaping to Conſtantinople, by the river and the Black Sea, returned, after a long circuit, to his exhauſted kingdom. A body of 1000 French knights had joined Sigiſmond; many of them fell in the battle; and thoſe of them who had

had ſurvived the ſlaughter of the day, were, excepting only twenty-four, led before the throne of the tyrant, and as many as refuſed to renounce their faith, were ſucceſſively beheaded in his preſence.

"In the year 1400, Tamerlane made war againſt Sultan Bajazet, and checked his ambitious deſigns. He invaded Syria, ſacked Aleppo, reduced Damaſcus to aſhes, and erected a pyramid of ninety thouſand heads on the ruins of Bagdad. Marching into the heart of the Ottoman empire, he defeated, and took priſoner, Bajazet, in the memorable battle of Angora. The haughty Sultan is ſaid afterwards to have been carried about in an iron cage, on a waggon, in Tamerlane's perpetual marches. In 1405, the conqueror of Aſia was met by the angel of death, in the neighbourhood

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bourhood of Otrar, when he was carrying his victorious arms into China.

" In 1422, Amurath II. beſieged Conſtantinople, but without ſucceſs, though the Turkiſh cannon were firſt pointed againſt its walls and bulwarks. The final conqueſt of that city, and with it the extinction of the Roman empire in the eaſt, was left to be accompliſhed by his ſon, Mahomet II. The inſtruments of deſtruction, which had been prepared by this ambitious tyrant, were the moſt tremendous that had ever appeared in the world. A Daniſh, or Hungarian deſerter, is ſaid to have caſt that enormous cannon, which required a ball of ſtone of ſix hundred pounds weight, was drawn by ſixty, ſome ſay ſeventy, yoke of oxen, and which, when it was firſt diſcharged by way of experiment,

periment, alarmed with the ſhock of the exploſion, thoſe who were upwards of twelve miles diſtant. The city was at length beſieged, both by ſea and land; fourteen batteries thundered at once upon its walls; the ancient engines of deſtruction were likewiſe employed. But the Greeks made a vigorous and obſtinate reſiſtance. I mean not to enter into a detail of the circumſtances of this daring and bloody enterpriſe. Let it ſuffice to obſerve, that after a ſiege of fifty-three days, the proud metropolis of the eaſt was entirely ſubdued: thouſands were inſtantly cut to pieces by the barbarians; and the laſt Conſtantine, having prudently caſt away the purple, fell undiſtinguiſhed, and was buried under a mountain of ſlain. The plunder of the houſes and of the churches was immenſe;

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but the number, and ſituation of the captives were moſt affecting. No regard to rank or ſex was paid by the unfeeling conquerors. Even the neareſt kindred were not allowed the melancholy comfort to ſpend their miſerable days together. They were rudely torn from each others embraces; and above ſixty thouſand of that devoted people, were diſperſed in diſtant ſervitude through the Turkiſh provinces."

Theſe conquerors, like the former, are repreſented with ſtings like ſcorpions, intimating, that they would alſo endeavour to inſtil the poiſon of their falſe religion wherever they went (a).

(a) Lowman objects ſtrongly to this interpretation of the prophecy, becauſe it places its accompliſhment far too late for the order of theſe predictions, (that is to ſay, the order which he eſtabliſhed,) and therefore he is obliged to divide the

the hiſtory of the incurſions of the Saracens into two parts, and to apply the preceding viſion to the former, and this viſion to the latter. The ſymbolical deſcriptions are ſo diverſe, that they ſeem plainly to denote two diſtinct people, ſimilar indeed in ſome things, but very different in others; on this account he is obliged to give a different turn to the very remarkable prediction of the uſe of gun-powder in this viſion, becauſe he applies it to a period long before its invention. He therefore ſuppoſes the fire, and ſmoke, and brimſtone, iſſuing out of their mouths, to denote only the terror of their appearance when marching to war: a ſenſe too general and inadequate for an inquiring mind to acquieſce in: and though it has been objected, that the fire, and the ſmoke, and the brimſtone, are improperly repreſented as *coming out of their mouths*, yet, nothing can be more natural than this repreſentation, when we conſider them in the attitude of riding up againſt an enemy, and firing their pieces as they went.

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Ver. 1. *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.*

Ver. 2. *And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*

Ver. 3. *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*

Ver. 4. *And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from heaven,*

ven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Ver. 5. *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,*

Ver. 6. *And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:*

Ver. 7. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

Ver. 8. *And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again and said, Go, and take the little book, which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

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Ver. 9. *And I went unto the angel, and ſaid unto him, Give me the little book. And he ſaid unto me, take it, and eat it up: and it ſhall make thy belly bitter, but it ſhall be in thy mouth ſweet as honey.*

Ver. 10. *And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth ſweet as honey: and as ſoon as I had eaten it my belly was bitter.*

Ver. 11. *And he ſaid unto me, Thou muſt propheſy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

It has been much diſputed by commentators, what is to be underſtood by the little book, which the apoſtle ſaw in the angel's hand: whether it was a book of prophecy, or the goſpel revelation, or the remaining part of the ſealed book, or a different one. Mede ſuppoſes that

that it contained the occurrences of Providence reſpecting the church, as the other did reſpecting the empire; and he thinks it goes back again to the apoſtle's time; grounding this opinion, upon what is certainly a very ſlight foundation, that the apoſtle was told, that he muſt propheſy *again* before many peoples, &c. Thoſe who hold it to be the goſpel revelation, give no ſatisfying account of the apoſtle being commanded to eat it, and of its being ſweet in his mouth, but making his belly bitter. They make it indeed, to ſignify the ſcriptures being given to the people at the time of the reformation, becauſe it is repreſented as open in the angel's hand; and yet none but the apoſtle was allowed to take it from him; which, upon this interpretation, looks rather as if it were to be con-

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fined to the office-bearers in the church. With reſpect to the angel; when we conſider the magnificence of the deſcription, and its ſimilarity to that of the Saviour, in the firſt chapter, and to that of God ſitting upon the throne, in the fourth, and that he is called an *angel*, a deſignation of office, there can be little doubt that the ſame divine perſon, the Lord and Saviour himſelf, is here to be underſtood. His *ſwearing by him that liveth for ever and ever*, can be no objection to this interpretation, when we find God himſelf ſwearing to confirm his promiſe, Heb. chap. vi. 17. This glorious perſon *ſet his right foot on the ſea, and his left foot on the earth*, intimating, that the world, and all things in it, were ſubject to him; and *he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth:* the word which is here employed,

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is that which donotes the lowing of an ox; but it has been obſerved by naturaliſts, that, when the old lions have taken any prey, they call upon their young, with a cry like the lowing of a cow; and indeed from Sparman's account of the roaring of the lions, there ſeems to be a conſiderable ſimilarity between their ſounds: he expreſſes the ſound of the lion's roaring, by the two vowels *uo uo;* ſo that the inaccuracy, if there be any, of uſing the other expreſſion, muſt be of the ſlighteſt kind: rather, perhaps, it is choſen on purpoſe, to denote vengeance and deſtruction But, what is of more importance to be conſidered, *when he had cried, ſeven thunders uttered their voices*, and when the apoſtle was going to write what the ſeven thunders uttered, a voice from heaven commanded him *to ſeal them*

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up and not to write them. It is thought by ſome expoſitors, that theſe thunders, in the courſe of the following prediction, are opened, as they expreſs it, into diſtinct voices. But they muſt have been diſtinct voices at firſt, otherwiſe it is not eaſy to conceive how the apoſtle could write them: with regard to their after opening, it ſeems to reſt upon no ſolid foundation, for there is not the ſmalleſt mention of them in any future prediction. It has been much inquired, what the meaning of theſe thunders is; though ſome have endeavoured to check this inquiry, by remarking the impropriety, or rather preſumption, of ſearching into what God has ordered to be ſealed up. But the learned Vitringa ſhrewdly obſerves, that if God did not mean that we ſhould know any thing of theſe thunders, he would not

not have revealed any thing by John reſpecting them, but paſſed over the whole in ſilence. This author, therefore, after inquiring into their myſterious import, thinks he has not only unfolded it, but likewiſe has diſcovered the reaſon why it was to be ſealed up, and not written: and indeed it muſt be confeſſed, that the manner in whieh he underſtands, and applies, their meaning, is very plauſible and ſtriking. He conſiders *thunders* as the emblems of unexpected events, that were to fall out like lightning and thunder, filling all places with noiſe and conſternation wherever they were: and he applies them, in this paſſage, to the cruſades, or the expeditions which were carried on to the Holy Land by the European nation, to deliver it out of the hands of the Saracens and Turks. Theſe, he

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he obſerves, by the noiſe, and terror, and calamity, which they occaſioned, poſſeſſed all the characters of myſtical thunders. Theſe commotions were ſo great, that they ſeemed to ſhake heaven and earth. In the Councils in which they were decreed, particularly the Clermont, under Urban II. and the Lateran, under Innocent III. ſuch was the concourſe of people of all ranks, and ſo great the commotion, the buſineſs was carried with ſo much noiſe, and with ſuch acclamations of all, that the lion never roared ſo loud and terrible. Theſe expeditions, likewiſe, were ſo new, and ſtrange, and remarkable, that hiſtory, ancient or modern, has ſcarcely any thing that can be compared with them. Beſides, it will not be denied, that in theſe extraordinary motions, there was an evident diſplay

play of the Divine judgements. It appeared from the event, that theſe expeditions deſtroyed a very great, and an almoſt incredible number of people. They emptied Europe, at that time abounding in population, of many hundred thouſands of its inhabitants, who miſerably periſhed, either by the guiles of the Greeks, or of the Saracens and Turks, or in battles and ſieges, or by ſtorms at ſea, or by the ſeverity and hardſhips of their marches. At the ſame time the Saracens and Turks, in this obſtinate war, ſuffered incredible damage, and many ſore diſaſters, and were deprived for a time, of the moſt flouriſhing part of their empire in Aſia. Here is a certain depth of Divine judgement, which we are altogether unable to fathom. God puniſhed the blind ſuperſtition of the Franks, by the

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Saracens and Turks; and now he ſubdues *their* ferocity by the Franks; and teaches them that he is at no loſs for a rod to chaſtiſe and reſtrain them. But what is remarkable, and particularly to our purpoſe, is, that the expeditions by the weſtern croiſaders, were exactly ſeven in number. The firſt, that celebrated one of Hugo the Great, the brother of Philip king of the Franks, and of Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lorrain, and of other princes of excellent valour, who led a choſen army into Aſia, in the year 1096. The next, that of Conrad III. emperor of Germany, and Louis VII. king of France, in the year 1147. The third, that of the emperor Frederic Barbaroſſa, in the year 1189. The fourth, that of Philip Auguſtus, king of France, and of Richard, king of England, in the year 1191. The

The fifth, that of the Flemings and Venetians, under Balduin and Dandalo. The ſixth, that of Andreas, king of the Hungarians, in 1217-18. The ſeventh, that of Louis IX. in the year 1248. And may it not be aſſigned as a reaſon, why God would not have theſe effects and conſequences of the thunders written, that, although they were memorable events, they could not be more fully recorded, without diſturbing the prophetical account of other occurrences, of much greater moment to the church, from the contemplation of which, God would not take off the attention of the reader of this prophecy. Nor were theſe expeditions worthy of being more fully narrated, as they were undertaken in folly, and terminated in diſaſter and diſgrace. This is confeſſed even by their hiſtorians themſelves.

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themſelves. William of Tyre, in the preface to his hiſtory, obſerves, 'there is nothing that occurs in the deeds of our princes, which a wiſe man would reckon worthy to be committed to memory.'

The declaration which the angel voluntarily confirmed with an oath, in the terms of our tranſlation runs thus, " *That there ſhould be time no longer;* but, perhaps more agreeably to the original words (a), *That the time ſhall not be yet*, or, as ſome critics render them, *that delay ſhall not be longer;* either way the meaning is the ſame; namely, that the time of taking vengeance upon the enemies of the church, was not yet arrived, but that it ſhould take place at the ſounding of the ſeventh trumpet: or, according to the laſt rendering,

Delay

(a) ὅτι χρονος οὐκ ἐσαι ἔτι.

Delay of that vengeance ſhould be no longer than the ſounding of the ſeventh trumpet; for then the myſtery of God ſhould be finiſhed; the great myſtery of ſo long permitting the prevalence of corruption and oppreſſion: then the time would certainly come, when *the dead*, that is, the dead martyrs, *ſhould be judged*, or avenged, *and when God ſhould reward his ſaints, and them that fear his name, ſmall and great, and ſhould deſtroy them which deſtroy the earth*, chap. xi. 18 That the little book which the angel had in his hand was a book of prophecy, is evident from the apoſtle being directed to *eat it*, as the ancient prophets ate their prophecies, that is, attentively peruſed them, and pondered them in their thoughts. This the apoſtle did; and *it was in his mouth ſweet as honey, but it made his belly*

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bitter, intimating, that the events which it contained, were partly prosperous and partly adverse, occasioning a mixture of joy and grief; and not, as commentators have thought, that the mere discovery of future events was the cause of his joy; for such a discovery had been long familar to him in the course of these visions. In consequence of his eating this book, it was said to him, *Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

Commentators have much perplexed and bewildered themselves, in determining what to make of this *little book*, even when they agree in considering it as a book of prophecy. In consequence of the notions they have entertained respecting it, they have divided the whole of the Revelation into two parts;

parts; one of which they call the *ſeal prophecy*, and the other, the *book prophecy:* forgetting that the former was a book prophecy, as well as the latter. Nor has it been an eaſy matter to determine the contents of this little book, what they are, and where they are to be found. Vitringa overthrows completely the ſcheme of Mr. Mede, who ſuppoſes that the little book goes back to the ſame period when the former commenced, and predicts the fate of the church unto the end of time, by obſerving, that, according to Mede's own ſcheme, the prophecy of this book is introduced between the ſixth and the ſeventh trumpet, and conſequently before the former ſeries is concluded, which not only is highly improbable, but throws the whole into confuſion. The truth is, that the contents of the little

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little book are no where related, nor do we know, but by conjecture, of what they conſiſted. It ſeems to have been meant ſolely for the apoſtle's uſe, and perhaps contained ſuch a deſcription of thoſe events which he afterward beheld in viſion, as might enable him more clearly to underſtand them. This, indeed, ſeems to have been the chief intent of this whole viſion, and was probably matter of more importance than we are apt to imagine: for, what deſerves to be remarked, we find, that, after all, an angel was ſent down from heaven to ſhew him many things, and to explain many things to him, which he would not otherwiſe have underſtood.

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Ver. 1. *And there was given me a reed, like unto a rod: and the angel ſtood, ſaying, Riſe, and meaſure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worſhip therein.*

Ver. 2. *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and meaſure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city ſhall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

In theſe and ſome following verſes, we have a lively deſcription of a time of deep corruption in the weſtern church, and of great difficulty

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culty and danger to the faithful ſervants of God, who muſt now ſeparate from that corrupt body, and ſuffer all the violence of their reſentment and enmity. By the emblem of the apoſtle meaſuring the temple and the altar, but leaving out the court which is without, is ſtrongly intimated, that God was now about to make a viſible diſtinction, between his faithful ſervants, and thoſe corrupt profeſſors of Chriſtianity, who had profaned the temple of the Lord, by pagan and idolatrous worſhip, and polluted it by their abominations and cruelties. The *meaſuring reed* which was given him, denotes the word of God, with which the church was to be meaſured, that every thing in it might be according to the pattern ſhewn in the mount of revelation; while the *outer court*, or that great body who had

had ſo long aſſumed the name of the church, was to be rejected; its whole extent, and even what was called *the holy city*, *being given unto the Gentiles*, meaning thoſe corrupt and paganiſed profeſſors, *who ſhould tread it under foot forty and two* prophetical *months* (a), or 1260 years. During this period, the true church was for the moſt part ſcarcely viſible; being either ſhut up within the walls of the ſanctuary; or, according to another viſion, concealed in an obſcure retreat in the wilderneſs, whither ſhe had fled. But even in this time of darkneſs and corruption, witneſſes for the truth ſhould be raiſed up.

Ver. 3. *And I will give power unto my two witneſſes, and they ſhall propheſy a thouſand*

(a) Prophetical months; months of 30 days, and in which each day is accounted a year.

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thouſand two hundred and threeſcore days, clothed in ſackcloth.

Ver. 4. *Theſe are the two olive trees, and the two candleſticks ſtanding before the God of the earth.*

In this prophecy, the Spirit of God ſpeaks of the witneſſes to the truth, as *two*, in alluſion to the teſtimony which the law requires; and probably, as would ſeem from the following part of the deſcription, in more immediate alluſion to Zerubabel and Joſhua; for they are repreſented as *two olive trees*, full of the precious doctrine of the ſpirit of truth himſelf, ſimilar to Zechariah's viſion, chap. iv. 3. and as *two candleſticks* plenteouſly ſupplied with the oil of this precious doctrine, and ſending forth its light and comfort in the midſt of ſurrounding darkneſs; thereby ſhewing the groſs errors

errors and corruptions in which mankind were held; and doing the ſame office in a ſpiritual ſenſe, in building up the temple of the Lord under the reign of myſtical Babylon, that Zerubabel and Joſhua did under ancient Babylon.

We are further informed reſpecting theſe witneſſes:

Ver. 5. *And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he muſt in this manner be killed.*

Here commentators have juſtly obſerved, that theſe witneſſes are compared to ſome of the greateſt prophets in ancient times, and particularly to Moſes, and Elias, who brought fire upon the enemies of God, and conſumed them. We

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muſt not conceive, however, that this was done by the witneſſes in a ſtrict and literal ſenſe; but only that they denounced the awful judgements of God, fitly repreſented by fire, againſt theſe wicked perſecutors: and therefore the fire of theſe judgements, thus denounced, is with great propriety, repreſented as *coming out of their mouths.* It is ſtill further declared reſpecting them:

Ver. 6. *Theſe have power to ſhut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to ſmite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

The alluſion to Moſes and Elias is ſtill kept up, as every one who knows their hiſtory will obſerve. But we muſt underſtand this in a ſpiritual

ſpiritual meaning, as an intimation, that, in the time of their prophecy, there ſhould be a great want of the heavenly evangelical doctrine, in the perſecuting antichriſtian church; as there was great want of rain to the Iſraelites in the time of Elias. This doctrine is often, in ſcripture, compared to rain (a); and therefore it is here myſtically ſo repreſented. Likewiſe, they have *power over waters to turn them into blood:* their ſalutary doctrine, through the wickedneſs of thoſe who reject it, being made the occaſion of war and ſlaughter, by perſecuting men, which at laſt turned to their own deſtruction; "God giving them blood to drink, for they were worthy." Rev. xvi. 6. Laſtly; *they had power to ſmite the earth with all plagues, as often as they would.*

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(a) Iſa. v. 6. and lv. 11.

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The prophets are often ſaid in ſcripture, to *do* the things which they *predict and denounce.* Thus God ſays to Iſaiah, when he was to denounce the awful judgement of ſpiritual blindneſs and ſtupidity upon the Iſraelites, chap. vi. 10 *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes; leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert and be healed.* This explains the meaning of the witneſſes *ſmiting the earth with all plagues:* namely, by denouncing them againſt the wicked, as from the mouth of God, who remarkably, and awfully, accompliſhed what they had ſpoken: and this was brought about apparently with ſo great facility, that they ſeemed to be able to do it *as often as they pleaſed.* Yet, notwithſtanding this tremendous power, what is very

very remarkable, and ſhews at once the malice and infatuation of their enemies, and the length they ſhould be permitted to go, though they ſhould not finally prevail, it is ſaid; CHAP. XI.

Ver. 7. *And when they ſhall have finiſhed their teſtimony, the beaſt that aſcendeth out of the bottomleſs pit ſhall make war againſt them, and ſhall overcome them, and kill them.*

Ver. 8. *And their dead bodies ſhall lie in the ſtreet of the great city, which ſpiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where alſo our Lord was crucified.*

Ver. 9. *And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations ſhall ſee their dead bodies three days and an half, and ſhall not ſuffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.*

Ver. 10. *And they that dwell upon the earth ſhall rejoice over them, and make merry,*

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merry, and ſhall ſend gifts one to another; becauſe theſe two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

The meaning only is, when they *ſhall be finiſhing* their mourning teſtimony, and ready to put off their ſackcloth, for we ſhall ſee them continuing their teſtimony ſtill, the beaſt, who is afterwards deſcribed as aſcending out of the abyſs, for John had not yet ſeen him, was to make war againſt them, and overcome them, and kill them. By *the Beaſt* here, we are to underſtand the Romiſh antichriſt, in all the debaſement of his ſuperſtition, and in all the height of his ſavage tyranny. At the period here referred to, he perſecuted theſe witneſſes with ſuch ſevere and unrelenting cruelty, that they were evidently borne down, and at laſt diſappeared as perſons dead;

dead; being apparently deſtroyed by the violence of the perſecution. But not ſatisfied with rooting them out from the earth, theſe wicked men treated their memory with the greateſt abhorrence and contempt; here ſymbolically expreſſed, by exhibiting their *dead bodies three days and an half*, a ſhocking and loathſome ſpectacle, in the moſt public *ſtreet of the great city, which ſpiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where alſo our Lord was crucified* This is a ſtriking deſcription of myſtical Babylon, by ſome of its prominent features: it is called *Sodom*, becauſe of the abominations of which it is full; and it is called *Egypt*, becauſe of its cruel oppreſſion and perſecution of the people of God. It ſeems likewiſe tacitly to be compared to Jeruſalem, that devoted city, *where alſo our Lord was crucified.* Their bodies

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are repreſented as lying in the ſtreet of the great city *three days and an half*, which cannot be underſtood literally, becauſe the time would be too ſhort for them that *dwelt upon the earth*, meaning their perſecutors every where, *to rejoice over them, and to ſend gifts one to another, and to make merry.* If, therefore, it denotes a definite time, we muſt underſtand it at leaſt to be three years and a half, a day for a year, according to the language of prophecy. But the ſpirit of the prediction ſeems to be, that this ſhould be a time of great affliction to the church, which ſhould then be in the loweſt ſtate of depreſſion; the witneſſes for the truth being perſecuted and ſlain, almoſt as ſoon as they appeared. Some have thought that it was not the enemies, but the friends of the witneſſes, who would not ſuffer their

their dead bodies to be put in graves. But theſe perſons are deſcribed as they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, a deſcription which, in the language of this prophecy, denotes the ſubjects of Antichriſt. Thus they are explained to John expreſsly, chap. xvii 15. "The waters which thou ſaweſt, where the whore ſitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." But what is moſt remarkable of all; while their enemies were looking upon them, and rejoicing that they were unable to torment them any more, by awakening the horrors of conſcience within them by their faithful teſtimony; they were ſeen to revive:

Ver. 11. *And after three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they ſtood upon their feet;*

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and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they ſtood upon their feet; the meaning is, they were raiſed up and honoured to bear teſtimony again: this is myſtically, *to be reſtored to life*, when they are reſtored to their office of witneſſing; their mouths being again opened, which for a time had been ſhut in ſilence. Their teſtimony to the truth, likewiſe, was delivered with great power; for God in his wonderful providence, when all things ſeemed to be in a hopeleſs condition, quickly raiſed up learned and pious men, and endued them with the ſame ſpirit with which the perſecuted and ſlain witneſſes of Chriſt had been moved; they, to the great terror of their adverſaries, taught the

the ſame doctrine, and profeſſed the ſame faith that the witneſſes had done: they propoſed and vindicated the truth with ſo much evidence and boldneſs, that the former witneſſes might with great propriety be ſaid *to live in them.* Beſides all this; the favour of God wonderfully protected them, ſo that their enemies were not able to hurt them. This, the following words ſymbolically and magnificently declare;

Ver. 12. *And they heard a great voice from heaven, ſaying unto them, Come up hither. And they aſcended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*

Their enemies beheld them, no doubt, with rage and diſappointment, when they were placed entirely out of their reach. I cannot think,

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think, with moſt commentators, that the witneſſes here, derived their ſecurity from an arm of fleſh; it was from the wonderful interpoſition, and protection of God, by whom even the greateſt earthly powers, were reſtrained from hurting them. This divine interpoſition, as it better ſuits the emblem of their being *taken up to heaven in a cloud*, ſo would it be much more conſentaneous to the nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, which, he expreſsly tells us, is not of this world, and therefore he would not allow his ſervants to fight. But while the faithful witneſſes of God were thus wonderfully preſerved, the judgements of heaven were poured forth upon their enemies; for,

Ver. 13 *The ſame hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city*

ity fell, and in the earthquake were ſlain of men ſeven thouſand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

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In that ſame hour; that is, much about that time, there *was a great earthquake;* an earthquake, in the language of prophecy, denotes commotions and changes in the ſtates and governments of this world; and the ſhaking was ſo great that a *tenth part of the city* (meaning myſtical Babylon) *fell.* By a *tenth* part, we are to underſtand a conſiderable part; called a *tenth*, probably in alluſion to the *ten* kingdoms of which myſtical Babylon was made up. This tenth part of the city *fell;* it fell, in the ſenſe of *falling off* from Babylon, and being loſt to its intereſt; and *in the earthquake*, meaning the great change which it produced,

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were ſlain of men ſeven thouſand; in the original it is *names of men*, which may ſignify perſons, or individuals. Accordingly, Beza renders the words *capita hominum*, heads of men. But as John writes much in the Hebrew idiom, he moſt probably means *men of name*, that is, men of rank and diſtinction; eſpecially as the deſtruction of ſuch a number of them, involving that of a much greater number of the common people, is an effect more adequate to the greatneſs of the cauſe; only ſeven thouſand being too few to have ſuffered in the fall of the tenth part of that vaſt city. Their *being ſlain*, however, in the myſtical language of prophecy, may, perhaps, only ſignify, that *they periſhed in reſpect of their rank, diſtinction, and offices.* The *remnant*, it is ſaid, were *affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven:* a plain evidence that

that this cannot be, as Mede thinks, the ſame prophecy with that of the fifth vial; for there "the people repented not, but blaſphemed God, becauſe of their plagues, and of their ſores"

This prophecy concludes with the following ſignificant expreſſions;

Ver. 14. *The ſecond woe is paſt; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*

Words which clearly determine that the prophecy belongs to the time of the ſixth trumpet, to which we ſhall ſee that ſeveral of the judgements of the third woe muſt likewiſe be referred.

This intereſting prophecy, ſo far as it reſpects the ſlaying of the witneſſes, and their being revived, and

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and taken up to heaven in a cloud, ſeems ſtill to wait for its accompliſhment. We have ſeen, indeed, *the temple meaſured*, in the church's emerging from corruption, while the outer court was delivered over to the Gentiles to be trodden down of them: and we have ſeen faithful witneſſes raiſed up from time to time, to teſtify againſt the prevailing corruption; but we have not yet ſeen the extinction of the witneſſes, or the laſt ſufferings of the church, which the full meaning of the prophecy undoubtedly denotes: for, after the witneſſes were ſlain, they revived, and were taken up to heaven in a cloud, in the ſight of their enemies; and immediately there was an earthquake, and *the ſeventh trumpet ſounded, and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdom of our Lord and of his Chriſt;* nothing that has

has yet occurred in hiſtory comes up to the meaning of this deſcription. The ſlaying of the witneſſes did not take place, in the ſenſe of this prophecy, even in the dreadful perſecution and ſlaughter of the Albigenſes, in the beginning of the 13th century; theſe were indeed *true witneſſes* for Chriſt, and the war againſt them was unqueſtionably made by *the beaſt*; yet we cannot fix the accompliſhment of the prophecy here, were it for no other reaſon, but that it does not agree to the period to which the prophecy refers. The prophecy makes the ſlaying of the witneſſes to happen towards the end of their mourning teſtimony, and when they were about to put off their ſackcloth; but the perſecution of the Albigenſes was at the very beginning of that period, and was the firſt open perſecution of the

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witneſſes by the Romiſh church. Neither could this ſlaying of the witneſſes be ſaid to take place at the martyrdom of John Huſs and Jerom of Prague, though that was more the deed of the Romiſh church than the former, being appointed by a general council; in which ſentence, that church may be conſidered as condemning, and killing, all the faithful witneſſes of Chriſt, both before and after. There is even another very remarkable circumſtance in this caſe: which is, that this ſame council of Conſtance, by which thoſe two holy confeſſors were committed to the flames, ſat *three years and a half*, during which time the dead bodies of the witneſſes might well be ſaid to have *lain in the ſtreet of the great city;* the Synod, all the while, perſiſting in the injuſtice and violence with which

which they had treated thoſe good men, and vindicating their own conduct in the moſt ſhameleſs manner. Nay farther, immediately after the Synod was diſſolved, theſe witneſſes might be ſaid to be reſtored to life again; their diſciples occaſioning great commotions in Bohemia, renouncing the communion of the Romiſh church, and all ſubjection to the Pope, whom they openly called the great Antichriſt, and defending themſelves againſt the emperor Sigiſmond, who made war upon them in ſupport of the Romiſh church; in which, when he and his party ſaw that they could not prevail, they invited the Bohemian brethren to a general council at Baſil, to plead their cauſe: the council, after hearing their complaints, judged it expedient, for the ſake of peace, to redreſs moſt of their grievances: this

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this promiſe, however, they did not fulfil; in conſequence of which, new, and greater, diſturbances aroſe; till at length the anathemas of the Pope were thundered forth againſt them, but without effect; for they ſtill refuſed all ſubjection to him. With much propriety, therefore, might it now be ſaid, *that the tenth part of the city fell*, when the kingdom of Bohemia thus dared to throw off the Papal yoke. So far, the learned Vitringa thinks, all the circumſtances of this hiſtory accord with the prophetical deſcription. But it is not eaſy to ſuppoſe, that a general council of Anti-chriſt's ſhould here receive the appellation of *heaven*, a term applied in this prophecy, to the true church, in contradiſtinction to that falſe and corrupt one. The 1260 days, or three years and a half, at the end of which

which, the witneſſes were to be ſlain, this learned expoſitor underſtands to denote three jubilean years and an half, making 172 years, which he computes from the end of the Papal war againſt the Albigenſes, to the Council of Conſtance. But this interpretation is quite inadmiſſible; the worthy author not reflecting that the 1260 days can never be converted, upon the principle of a day for a year, into any other term than twelve hundred and ſixty common years; nor is there a ſingle inſtance of any ſuch year as a jubilean year, to be found in the whole courſe of this prophecy; not to ſay that the period itſelf is wrong computed, as it ought to commence at the beginning, and not at the end, of the Papal war againſt the Albigenſes; that war being a time of great perſecution and ſuffering, when

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when the witneſſes muſt be ſuppoſed to have propheſied in ſackcloth, as well as afterwards. The ingenious interpreter, however, finds himſelf obliged at length to relinquiſh the above expoſition, for this ſtrong reaſon, that the cruel martyrdom of thoſe two holy men, was not the laſt perſecution of the church by Antichriſt, which the prophecy plainly ſuppoſes it to have been. The ſame objection holds againſt any ſubſequent period of her ſufferings that has yet occurred, whether at the Reformation, the Pariſian maſſacre, the revocation of the edict of Nantes, or any other.

As this prophecy, then, remains to be fulfilled in the future ſufferings of the church from the hand of Antichriſt, it confirms the opinion of thoſe pious men, who have thought that his power and tyranny

ny will yet prevail; that the true church will ſuffer much from his implacable enmity, and religion be brought to a very low ebb. It muſt indeed be acknowledged, that appearances, at preſent, are againſt this opinion. Antichriſt's dominion ſeems greatly declined, and the progreſs of knowledge threatens its ſpeedy deſtruction. We learn from experience, however, that ſuch appearances are not to be built upon. Worldly power may forcibly obſtruct the progreſs of knowledge, and unforſeen events revive the influence of the Man of ſin. After many awful judgements poured out upon him, we ſhall ſtill ſee him, under the ſixth vial, uniting with the dragon, and gathering together, by his influence, the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to fight in his cauſe. This ſhews what great

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great power Antichrift ſhall have immediately before his total overthrow. About that time then, probably, we may look for the ſlaying of the witneſſes, as deſcribed in this prophecy; for we know it ſhall be a time of great difficulty and danger to the ſaints. Therefore, our Lord ſayeth, " Behold I come as a thief, Bleſſed is he that watcheth."

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

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Ver. 15. *And the ſeventh angel ſounded; and there were great voices in heaven, ſaying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.*

Ver. 16. *And the four and twenty elders, which ſat before God on their ſeats, fell upon their faces, and worſhipped God,*

Ver 17. *Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and waſt, and art to come; becauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great power, and haſt reigned.*

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Ver. 18. *And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they ſhould be judged, and that thou ſhouldeſt give reward unto thy ſervants the prophets, and to the ſaints, and them that fear thy name, ſmall and great; and ſhouldeſt deſtroy them which deſtroy the earth*

Ver. 19. *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was ſeen in his temple the ark of his teſtament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

The ſounding of the ſeventh trumpet introduces an entire new ſtate of things; the triumph of religion, and the reign of righteouſneſs and peace. Upon this occaſion the four and twenty elders, who had long beheld it in proſpect, fall down in humble proſtration before God, and perform an act of ſolemn adoration

ation and thankſgiving to the great Almighty, for the bright diſplay of his power, and juſtice, and faithfulneſs, which is here exhibited. They ſay, likewiſe, *for the nations were angry;* they raged at the proſpect of their own approaching ruin, and ſet themſelves againſt the Lord and his anointed, making the laſt effort to oppoſe the kingdom of Chriſt: *and thy wrath*, that great and terrible wrath of the Lord, by which the enemies of Chriſt, and of his people, were to be deſtroyed, *is come: and the time of the dead that they ſhould be judged*, meaning the dead martyrs, who had been ſlain for the word of God, and for the teſtimony of Jeſus; the time was now arrived when they ſhould be vindicated and avenged: when *his ſervants the prophets*, meaning thoſe, who, by their faithful warnings, had preſerved many

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many from corruption, ſhould be rewarded; when their characters ſhould be honoured; and they ſhould be comforted after all the ſufferings they had endured; and when all that feared the name of the Lord, both ſmall and great, ſhould be in eſtimation; while deſtruction ſhould ſeize upon thoſe who deſtroyed the earth by their perſecuting cruelties; that wicked race being then extinguiſhed, that the people of God might delight themſelves in the abundance of peace. This viſion further informs us, that *the temple of God in heaven was opened*, intimating, that the pure and ſpiritual nature of the church, as laid down in the word of God, was then clearly underſtood; *and there was ſeen in his temple the ark of his teſtament*, intimating, that the true doctrine concerning Chriſt, here myſtically

myſtically repreſented by the ark, ſhould be then clearly taught and believed: or rather, that the faithfulneſs of God to his covenant, in delivering his people out of all their troubles, and making them to rejoice and triumph over their enemies, ſhould then be made manifeſt: *and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail;* theſe are prophetical emblems of any extraordinary appearances of the Divine Majeſty, and power, and preſence, in taking vengeance on the wicked, and working deliverance for the ſaints

With reſpect to the accompliſhment of this prophecy; there is every reaſon to conclude that it is ſtill future; it is certainly poſterior to the killing of the witneſſes, in the former prophecy, which we have

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have ſeen remains ſtill to be accompliſhed in the future ſufferings of the church from the hand of Antichriſt; and we cannot ſuppoſe, with good Mr. Durham and others, that the ſeventh trumpet ſounded at the time of the reformation, as then the period commenced, which was gradually to iſſue in the deſtruction of Antichriſt, and the proſperity and glory of the church; for, at the killing of the witneſſes, the church muſt ſuffer a ſtill deeper decline than ſhe has ever yet experienced; and notwithſtanding all the reformation ſhe boaſts of, the principle upon which ſhe is conſtructed, makes her too much a worldly kingdom, to accord with the pure and ſpiritual character of the millenium church.

VISION

VISION OF THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN.

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Ver. 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the ſun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve ſtars.*

Under the emblem of a woman, the Chriſtian church is here unqueſtionably repreſented. Her appearance was ſplendid and glorious; ſhe was *clothed with the ſun*, the rays of that orb covering her like a garment; intimating, that ſhe owed all her magnificence and excellency to the Sun of Righteouſneſs himſelf, and that the light of heavenly truth, which

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which was to be diſpenſed by her, was derived from him alone. She is likewiſe deſcribed with *the moon under her feet*, denoting, that the long night of ſhadowy ceremonial was over; and as having *upon her head a crown of twelve ſtars*, by which the precious apoſtolic doctrine, which ſhe held forth as her peculiar glory, is myſtically repreſented. Can we doubt that the apoſtle now beheld the church, in her native purity and luſtre, before ſhe was contaminated by the world, or diſgraced with its affected ornaments, when he deſcribes her with the ſolar light for her garment, and the ſtars of heaven for the jewels of her crown. This laſt circumſtance, *that ſhe wore a crown upon her head*, likewiſe ſufficiently intimates that ſhe was deſtined to triumph, notwithſtanding all the injury and oppreſſion

oppreſſion which ſhe was firſt to ſuffer. And we learn, not obſcurely, from the ſhining jewels of her crown, the manner in which ſhe ſhall obtain her triumph, that it ſhall be by the all-vanquiſhing power of the apoſtolic doctrine; when it ſhall dart its piercing rays over every land, and bring the world in ſubjection under it. This whole appearance the apoſtle conſiders as *a great ſign*, having ſomething very portentous, as well as wonderful, in it.

Ver. 2. *And ſhe being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

The child which is here alluded to, is no other than the deep myſterious truth of ſalvation, which ſhe was then to bring forth, under

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all the throes and agonies of the fevereſt perſecution. This laſt circumſtance is moſt graphically repreſented, by another portentous ſign which the apoſtle beheld:

Ver. 3 *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having ſeven heads, and ten horns, and ſeven crowns upon his heads.*

Ver. 4 *And his tail drew the third part of the ſtars of heaven, and did caſt them to the earth: and the dragon ſtood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as ſoon as it was born.*

This ravenous and frightful monſter appeared in the form of *a great red dragon:* but he was diſtinguiſhed from all others of the kind, and ſeemed rather to reſemble ſome of the fabulous monſters of antiquity;

quity; for he had *ſeven heads and ten horns:* and another extraordinary circumſtance in his appearance was, that he had *ſeven crowns upon his heads.* By this ſtrange and horrible figure, there is no doubt that the cruel and perſecuting Roman empire is denoted. Its ſeven different forms of government, all ſeated in the ſeven-hilled, or ſeven-headed, city, are repreſented by his *ſeven heads crowned with ſeven crowns.* Its vaſt extent, and its tremendous power are repreſented, both by his enormous ſize, and the ten horns which he bore; and its cruel and perſecuting ſpirit, by his red or bloody colour. That both his ſize and power were enormous and terrible, we have the moſt aſtoniſhing proof from the following incident; that with one ſweep of his tail he *drew the third part of the ſtars of heaven, and did caſt them*

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them to the earth. But although the Roman empire is very naturally repreſented by this emblem, it is evident from ver. 9. that it is ſo ſhadowed forth, chiefly, becauſe it was animated by *the great dragon, that old ſerpent called the devil and Satan*, and therefore all his inſidious malice and agency are to be taken into view. It was then by this, his grand inſtrument and agent, that *the dragon ſtood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as ſoon as it was born.*

Ver. 5. *And ſhe brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

This child, myſtically repreſenting the precious truths of the goſpel, appeared ſtrong and manly, notwith-

notwithſtanding all the hardſhips of his infant condition: and he was afterwards *to rule all nations* as *with a rod of iron*, bringing them at length into entire ſubjection under him. About this child the divine care was peculiarly employed: He is ſaid to have been *caught up unto God, and to his throne*, as to a place of abſolute ſafety: intimating, that the pure and heavenly doctrine ſhould be preſerved ſecure, amidſt the greateſt dangers that could ariſe, either from the undermining acts of pretended friends, or from the daring attacks of profeſſed enemies.

Ver. 6. *And the woman fled into the wilderneſs, where ſhe hath a place prepared of God, that they ſhould feed her there a thouſand two hundred and threeſcore days.*

Here we are informed that, notwithſtanding all the malice and fury

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fury of the dragon, the true church herſelf ſhould likewiſe be preſerved upon the earth; although indeed, for a long time, in a very obſcure and oppreſſed condition; for the woman fled *into the wilderneſs*, an expreſſion denoting a retreat from enemies, and danger; and there, as in a place prepared of God for her, ſhe was wonderfully protected and ſuſtained, for the ſpace of one thouſand two hundred and threeſcore years; a *day*, as almoſt all expoſitors agree, being here put for a year.

Ver. 7. *And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought againſt the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels;*

Ver. 8. *And prevailed not; neither was their place any more in heaven.*

Ver.

Ver. 9 *And the great dragon was caſt out, that old ſerpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was caſt out into the earth, and his angels were caſt out with him.*

We learn from theſe verſes, that, during this period, a hard conflict was maintained by the faithful followers of Chriſt againſt their enemies. This was repreſented to the mind of this apoſtle under the awful figure of armies fighting in the ſky. On the one ſide was Michael, the prince of the people of God, the captain of ſalvation, attended by his angels; on the other ſide, the dragon and his angels. But theſe were unequal to the conteſt, and, far from prevailing, were driven totally off the field, ſo that they had *no place in heaven any more.* This evidently denotes, in the language of

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of prophecy, a diminution of power, and a declenſion of authority; and that too, as immediately appears, in a humiliating degree; for the great dragon himſelf, even that old ſerpent, the origin of all miſchief and evil, who is emphatically ſtiled *the devil*, the calumniator, the accuſer of the people of God, and *Satan*, their inveterate foe, who, to uſe the language of Daniel in another caſe, *had waxed great*, in the inſtruments of his power and his malice, *even to the hoſt of heaven*, he was caſt down to the earth, and theſe his angels, with him.

Ver. 10. *And I heard* (continues the apoſtle,) *a loud voice ſaying in heaven, Now is come ſalvation, and ſtrength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Chriſt; for the accuſer of our brethren*

brethren is caſt down, which accuſeth them before God, day and night.

Ver 11. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their teſtimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Ver. 12. *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the ſea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, becauſe he knoweth that he hath but a ſhort time.*

The victory, which the church obtained under her glorious king and head, it is natural to ſuppoſe, would not paſs uncelebrated. But it is remarkable that the ſong of triumph was heard only in heaven; probably for this reaſon, that the ſaints on earth had new ſufferings to encounter. Nevertheleſs, it was the period of the commencement

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of the church's deliverance, and therefore, with great propriety, it was announced and celebrated, as we have already heard, by the saints [a] above, who have more extensive views of the plans of Providence than we. This was intended for the encouragement and comfort of the church militant on earth, at the time to which it refers. The manner in which they obtained this victory is likewise celebrated, and the heroism which they displayed; for, continues this heavenly song, *They overcame him by the*

[a] Though this song seems to have struck the ear of the apostle as uttered by one loud voice, yet, there is no room to doubt that it arose from the united and harmonious voices of many; probably, of the whole redeemed society in heaven: that it was not sung by angels is evident, for they who uttered it speak of the saints on earth as their brethren; but we no where read of such a relation subsisting between angels and men.

the blood of the Lamb, by the faith of which they were ſupported and animated, under their greateſt ſufferings; *and by the word of their teſtimony*, which carried an energy along with it that overpowered the enemy: and, penetrated by the lively ſentiments of redeeming grace, *they loved not their lives unto the death*, but cheerfully reſigned them in their maſter's cauſe. In conſequence of this ſignal victory, and the proſpects of providence which it laid open, the celeſtial ſpirits, conſiſting both of angels and of glorified ſaints, are called to rejoice, ſo that the heavens themſelves might reſound. But the concluding part of this ſong gives intimation to *the inhabitants of the earth and of the ſea, that the devil was come down unto them in great wrath, knowing that his time was but ſhort.* This is, by far, the moſt difficult

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difficult part to explain. By *the inhabitants of the earth and of the ſea*, we cannot here underſtand the enemies of God and of his people, as is commonly ſuppoſed: theſe are certainly not the objects of the devil's perſecuting rage: his fury is pointed againſt the church; and therefore the true ſervants of God muſt be the perſons who are here intended. The defeat and degradation which he had ſuffered on their account, tended only to exaſperate him the more againſt them; and the apprehenſion which he felt *that his reign would be but ſhort*, inflamed his reſentment to a high degree. But why are they deſcribed *as the inhabitants of the earth and of the ſea*, which has been thought to indicate that they were of a worldly character? This is the circumſtance which has miſled expoſitors. It is, however

ever, only intended to mark the place of their abode, as within the limits of his authority; either more immediately within the body of his empire, or in the diſtant or maritime provinces.

Ver. 13. *And when the dragon ſaw that he was caſt unto the earth, he perſecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

Ver. 14. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that ſhe might fly into the wilderneſs, into her place, where ſhe is nouriſhed for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the ſerpent.*

Ver. 15. *And the ſerpent caſt out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cauſe her to be carried away of the flood.*

The effects of the dragon's enraged malice, and the future ſufferings

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ferings of the church ariſing from it, are here moſt ſtrikingly deſcribed. He immediately ſets himſelf to perſecute the woman which had brought forth the man child. He had, however, no ſmall difficulty in accompliſhing his aim: for, as will afterwards appear, the woman, long before this time, was in her wilderneſs ſtate, and therefore the expreſſions that are here made uſe of, ought to be thus rendered; *But to the woman had been given* (a) *two wings of a great eagle, ſo that ſhe had fled into the wilderneſs, into her place, from the face of the ſerpent:* and there ſhe was nouriſhed for *a time, and times, and half time*, that is for three years and a half: each year being, agreeable to ancient computation, 360 days; and

(a) The aoriſt is here put for the pluperfect, as in ſeveral other places: ſee Grotius on Matt. xiv. 3. and on Rev. xix. 19.

and a day being aſſumed for a year, makes the whole amount to 1260 years; the preciſe time that was formerly ſpecified. Nothing can be more lively and beautiful than to repreſent the flight of the woman, as performed by *wings of a great eagle*. It is the emblem of a ſafe retreat; and has ſomething very tender and affecting in it, when we conſider it in alluſion to the wonderful providence of God towards his ancient people; when, in his own emphatical language, he *bare them upon eagles wings, and carried them all the days of old*. Now the church was removed out of the ſerpent's reach, and had lain concealed for ages from his ſight. But he at length deſcried her, and in the fury of his malice, he *caſt out of his mouth water, as a flood*, making armies, the inſtruments of his vengeance, to ruſh

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ruſh forth upon her with violence to deſtroy her. Let us hear how his exterminating ſcheme was diſappointed.

Ver. 16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up the flood which the dragon caſt out of his mouth.*

Incidents occurred in the conduct of providence, which as effectually checked the progreſs of his armies, as if the earth had opened its mouth and ſwallowed them up: and thus the woman was preſerved amidſt all his attempts againſt her.

Ver. 17. *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her ſeed, which keep the*

the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This new disappointment added fuel to his rage, which he could now express only by persecuting those of her seed who still remained lurking in different parts of his dominions. These were distinguished from others, by not following the commandments of men in matters of religion, but the commandments of God; and by faithfully adhering, both in principle and practice, to the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, amidst all the corruption which prevailed around them.

There are scarcely any of the visions in this long series of prophecy, which have been more misunderstood and misinterpreted, than this which we have been surveying. It is almost universally referred to

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the perſecution of the church under pagan Rome, to her apparent advancement and triumph in the time of Conſtantine, and to the adverſe incidents which occurred between his reign and the riſe of Antichriſt. One ſhould have thought that the inconſiſtencies of this interpretation were too obvious, for ingenious and learned men to have either propoſed or adopted it. Upon this principle, the apoſtle, under the notion of a prophetical viſion, is made to ſee what was then paſt, namely, the ſufferings which the Chriſtian church had endured prior to the time when it was exhibited. He is made to ſee the Roman empire, with ſeven crowned heads or governments, when it ſhould have appeared only with ſix; this viſion having nothing to do with the ſeventh, as that head did not ariſe, according to this interpretation, till the

the period here referred to was over. Then they, who thus interpret the prophecy, are obliged to break the order of the narration itſelf, by ſuppoſing that the woman's flight is introduced in the ſixth verſe, not in its proper place, as that event, according to them, was poſterior to the war in heaven, which is afterwards mentioned, when the devil was caſt out into the earth, in the time of Conſtantine, and his place was not found in heaven any more; although not long after he roſe to greater power than ever. Finally, they interpret *the ſhort time* which was allotted him for perſecuting the Chriſtians, after he was caſt down into the earth, to be the whole length of the reign of Antichriſt, no leſs than one thouſand two hundred and threeſcore years; which is certainly very improperly called *ſhort*, as it is more than double

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ble the time in which he had formerly been permitted to exercise his cruelties upon them. All these inconsistencies and contradictions, do unavoidably occur upon this interpretation; a sure evidence that it cannot give the sense of this vision.

The truth is, that the vision belongs chiefly to the times of Antichrist himself: but as some of the circumstances allude to the pagan Roman empire, therefore it is carried on under one general emblem, which may very properly represent them both. If we so understand it, the former inconsistencies and embarrassments will all vanish, and we shall contemplate its important discoveries, in a clear and satisfying light. We see the difficulty of propagating the gospel truth through the wide extent of the Roman empire, under the notion of a woman travailing

travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. Her diſtreſs muſt, at this time, have been occaſioned by the dragon in his *pagan* character, who is repreſented as threatening and annoying her, and lying in wait to devour her child when he ſhould be born. As ſoon as the birth was accompliſhed, in the downfal of paganiſm, and the triumph of Chriſtianity in the time of Conſtantine, we behold the affliction and obſcurity into which the church was quickly to fall, and under which ſhe was long to continue in the days of Antichriſt, repreſented by the woman's flight into the wilderneſs, that ſhe might eſcape the effects of his inſidious malice. Here now, it is evident, he muſt have carried on his deſigns againſt her, under the ſemblance of a Chriſtian character, though it was, in reality, that ſame character of

Antichriſt

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Antichriſt, in which he afterwards openly appeared, when he acted under his ſeventh head. And there ſeems to be a peculiar propriety in introducing him here in this his laſt, and moſt monſtrous character, as manifeſting, before hand, his enmity againſt the church, in order to intimate that now was the period when Antichriſt's influence commenced, and when the foundation of his kingdom began to be laid. Hence, likewiſe, the church would be ſignificantly warned of the ſufferings ſhe was to meet with under his tremendous reign, that ſhe might begin to prepare for her wilderneſs ſtate. As a further proof that the dragon was intended, in this viſion, to repreſent the proud Romiſh Antichriſtian, as well as pagan tyranny, we ſee him not only with ſeven heads, but with ſeven crowns, having the ſeventh head crowned

crowned as well the reſt; which was moſt exactly and literally verified, when Pope Damaſus II. firſt cauſed himſelf to be crowned, a ceremony which has ſince been obſerved by all his ſucceſſors, with this only difference, that, from the time of Urban V. the crown was changed from a ſingle, to a triple one, to ſhew that Chriſt's vicar on earth is poſſeſſed of a threefold power, the pontifical, imperial, and royal. The ſame thing is likewiſe evident from this other circumſtance, that the dragon ſwept down with his tail the third part of the ſtars of heaven, and caſt them to the earth; which is but of forced application to the imperial government, upon any of the interpretations which have been commonly offered; but if we underſtand it of the papal dominion, the ſenſe is natural and eaſy; for then, this part of the viſion will be

of

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of the ſame import with Daniel's *little horn*, by whom three of the firſt horns were plucked up by the roots; meaning the Grecian power in Italy, and that of the Lombards, and Franks, all which he deſtroyed to make way for himſelf. Theſe are here repreſented by the *third part of the ſtars of heaven*, three being the neareſt to the third part of ten that can be expreſſed in whole numbers. This is a circumſtance too important to be omitted, where the progreſs of Antichriſtian ambition and tyranny is meant to be deſcribed; and yet, if we explain it away from this paſſage, where it is ſo clearly expreſſed, we ſhall look for it in vain in any other part of theſe prophecies. From all theſe obſervations, and indeed from the whole ſtrain and ſpirit of this viſion, it is evident, not only that the dragon denotes Rome Antichriſtian, as well

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as Rome pagan, but the oppoſition he gave to the woman before ſhe was delivered of her child, belongs to her pagan character; whereas, that which he occaſioned afterwards, can only be underſtood of him in his Antichriſtian character, becauſe the times of his pagan authority were now no more. We have ſeen already, how ſhe brought forth her manly off-ſpring, in the doctrine of heavenly truth which ſhe iſſued forth into the world, and which was finally to bring all nations in ſubjection under it; and we are given to underſtand, that it was taken immediately into the divine protection, and preſerved as ſafe amidſt all the errors which afterwards aroſe, as if it had been taken up to God, and to his throne. In the mean time the church was faſt removing into the wilderneſs, where ſhe was to remain for one thouſand

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two hundred and threeſcore prophetical days, meaning the years of her exile, and of her ſorrow. During this period, the battle in heaven is fought, by which the audacity and fury of Antichriſt, and his fatal repulſe and degradation, are exhibited in a very ſtriking manner. This intereſting and aſtoniſhing ſight was moſt ſeaſonably introduced, both for a warning and a conſolation to the church; that ſhe might prepare for the ſufferings which awaited her; and, that ſhe might hold faſt her confidence amidſt the cruelties of her enemies, aſſured that ſhe was ſoon to be crowned with victory and triumph.

In the following part of the viſion, we behold this intereſting ſight exemplified and verified upon the earth. For *when the dragon ſaw that he was caſt unto the earth, he immediately ſet himſelf to perſecute the woman.* Here it

it is of chief importance, to fix the time when the dragon was *caſt down*. It could not be in the time of Conſtantine; for it could not then be ſaid *that his place was not found in heaven any more*, as we ſee him, quickly after, riſing to a degree of power and influence beyond what he had ever formerly attained. We muſt therefore ſeek for it in the ſtages of his declining authority, when he was expoſed as Antichriſt unto the eye of the world. And he was ſo expoſed, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, by the Waldenſes and Albigenſes, Chriſtians inhabiting the vallies of Savoy, Piedmont and the South of France. They had then become very numerous; in conſequence of which, his character, was, by great multitudes, held in abhorrence, and his authority treated with contempt. This exaſperated his fury againſt the

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the woman, whom he had not lately perceived; for ſhe had been hid for ages in her wilderneſs ſtate; but he now diſcovered her in her retreat, and, as the viſion repreſents it, *caſt out of his mouth water, as a flood after her, to deſtroy her.* In Scripture, the inroads of a powerful and enraged enemy are admirably depicted by an overflowing torrent, which carries devaſtation and ruin wherever it comes. Such was the dreadful calamity with which the church was now threatened, when ſhe was to be found only among the obſcure inhabitants of the vallies. Pope Innocent III. excited both princes and people to exterminate them by a cruſade. No leſs than five hundred thouſand, it is aſſerted, under the ſign of the croſs, marched forth againſt them; and the murders which they committed, of perſons of every age and condition, are too ſhocking

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to relate. At length, however, according to the ſtriking repreſentation in the viſion, the *earth helped the woman.* The wars in Italy between the Pope and the Emperor giving a different direction to the papal force, *ſwallowed up the flood;* and other lands afforded the church, for a time at leaſt, a more ſecure and peaceful abode.

But the greateſt fall which the dragon experienced was at the time of the reformation; and then too his anger was kindled into a flame. The emperor Charles V. and the Roman pontiff entered into an alliance for the extirpation of that alarming hereſy, as it was called. The church was again to be expoſed to the fury of her enemies. The dominions of the Elector of Saxony, one of her beſt ſupporters, were invaded in his abſence. His army was afterwards defeated by the emperor

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peror at Mulhauſen, and he himſelf made priſoner. The church was then ſuffering ſeverely, from the oppreſſions of the emperor's brother in Bohemia. But the *earth now*, in a very remarkable manner, *helped the woman.* Maurice, the invader and uſurper of Saxony, broke his alliance with the emperor, entered into a treaty with Henry II. of France, traverſed the upper Germany with his troops, every where reſtoring the rejected miniſters to their churches, marched rapidly to Inſpruck in order to ſeize the emperor, who with difficulty ſaved himſelf by flight. This extraordinary incident, iſſued in the peace of Paſſau, and the ſecurity of the proteſtants in Germany. But ſtill the rage of the dragon was unabated. Baffled in his attempts to recover the revolted ſtates and kingdoms, he went to make war with the true

followers

followers of Jesus, many of whom remained in different parts of his dominions. This he did, by the cruel persecutions which he every where raised against them, by various massacres which he instigated; particularly the horrid massacre of Paris; and by the permanent massacres of the infernal tribunal of the inquisition (a).

(a) The general judgement of commentators upon this vision is, that it represents the state of the church prior to the reign of Constantine the Great, her persecutions under the pagan Roman emperors, her deliverance and exaltation when the empire became Christian, as it is commonly expressed, and when Satan, who had so long ruled there, was cast out of his seat, and finally, her subsequent state of obscurity and suffering till Antichrist arose. They differ, however, considerably in their interpretation of the several parts of the vision. By the *child* which the woman brought forth, Markius understands Christ himself; and by his *being taken up to God and to his throne*, his actual ascension in heaven. But when

when the apoſtle wrote, this was long paſt, and therefore cannot be the import of this prophetical viſion. Forbes, Mede, Durham, Waple, and others, underſtand by *the man child*, Chriſtian converts, thus making the mother and the child to be the ſame; and by his being *caught up to God and to his throne*, they underſtand the exalted ſtate of the church, in the time of Conſtantine, though there cannot be a doubt, that her ſinking down into corruption is from thence to be dated. *The war in heaven between Michael and the Dragon*, they interpret of the ſtruggle between Chriſtianity and paganiſm, under the heathen Roman emperors, and the ſufferings which the church then endured; although, by the ſcheme which they lay down, the ſame thing was juſt now repreſented by the woman in labour. *The water which the dragon caſt out of his mouth*, and *the earth helping the woman*, they think, denote the Arian and other hereſies, which ſprung up in the church, the tide of which was ſtemmed by the decrees of general councils by which they were condemned. But Waple, Biſhop Newton, and others interpret *the water*, of the incurſions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire; while they differ much about the manner in which they were ſwallowed up by the earth. I only further take notice of the opinion of the learned Vitringa. He interprets the

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man child, of Conſtantine the Great, in which he is followed by Biſhop Newton; although that emperor retained the heathen office of *Pontifix Maximus* till his death, favoured the Arians, perſecuted the orthodox, and was not even baptized into the Chriſtian faith till the time of his laſt ſickneſs. He likewiſe interprets his *being caught up to God and to his throne*, of his being raiſed, by a remarkable diſpoſition of Providence to the throne of the empire. He underſtands *the woman's flying into the wilderneſs*, of the church being moved to the weſt among the barbarous people, where ſhe had not formerly a place; and conſiders this as reſpecting three different periods: 1ſt, The time when arianiſm prevailed: 2d, The time when monaſteries were founded in the weſt, which were a retreat to the pious from the influence of ſurrounding corruption: 3d, The time when the church, having diſappeared in the eaſt, was preſerved in Germany and France. He explains the *water which the ſerpent caſt forth after the woman*, of the inroads of the Saracens into Spain and France; and *the earth opening her mouth and ſwallowing it up*, of the complete and terrible victory which Charles Martel obtained over them in the year 732; which effectually obſtructed their further progreſs in Europe.

VISION OF THE BEAST WITH SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS.

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Ver. 1. *And I ſtood upon the ſand of the ſea, and ſaw a beaſt riſe up out of the ſea, having ſeven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of Blaſphemy.*

Ver. 2. *And the beaſt which I ſaw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his ſeat, and great authority.*

It muſt be evident to every reader, that this is a new viſion which the apoſtle begins to deſcribe. He

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is now placed upon the *ſand of the ſea*, in a convenient ſtation for viewing the monſtrous animal which was to ſpring up out of it. He beheld him when he aroſe: *his body was like that of a leopard;* but, beſides the leopard's head, there were ſix other heads attached to it, the forms of which he does not deſcribe (a). But he tells us that this terrible creature had the feet *of a bear:* and, probably, in his ſeventh, or leopard's head, (the only head with which the viſion is properly concerned), he had the *mouth of a lion.*

(a) The arrangement of the heads has been differently conceived of by expoſitors. Many ſuppoſe the ſeventh head to have been placed in the midſt. But the order in which Mede repreſents them is much more ſimply and ingeniouſly fancied. He ſuppoſes them to have grown out one above another, in the order of the governments, every new government ſuperſeding the former, ſo that the ſeventh head ſtood above all the reſt.

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lion. He had *ten horns*, planted, as I conceive, upon this ſeventh, or laſt head: becauſe, at the time to which the viſion refers, they did not belong to any of the other. Finally, this fearful apparition *roſe up out of the ſea*, by which, I preſume, we are to underſtand, a mixed multitude of people, ſuch as compoſed the vaſt extent of his empire when he uſurped the government over them (a). Here then we have a monſter of ſo ſingular a character, for

(a) *Riſing out of the ſea*, cannot be underſtood, as is commonly ſuppoſed, to denote riſing out of the convulſions of ſtates, or the commotions of the people; in oppoſition to the *two horned beaſt* which is ſuppoſed to have grown ſilently out of the earth. If any paſſage could ſupport ſuch an interpretation, it would be Daniel vii. in which the four great monarchies are repreſented as riſing out of the ſtormy ſea: but the prophet afterward informs us, that they riſe out of the earth.

for fierceneſs, and vigour, and rapacity, that the ſtrongeſt inſtance of theſe which nature furniſhes, are the conſtituent parts of his compoſition. When we look into the ancient prophecies, and particularly into thoſe of Daniel, in which emblems of this nature are introduced and explained, we cannot entertain a doubt, that a great tyrannical power is here ſignificantly repreſented: And, that this power is Papal Rome in all the extent of its policy and domination, the *ſeven heads*, denoting the ſeven hilled city and its ſeven forms of government; *the ten horns*, denoting ten kingdoms in ſubjection under it; *and the name of Blaſphemy upon* one (a) of *his heads*, are

(a) This is certainly the ſenſe in which we are to underſtand the expreſſion: for, prior to Antichriſt, *blaſphemy* did not belong to the Roman government more than to any other; all of them being

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are palpable and ſtriking proofs. To complete the deſcription, we are told, that *the dragon*, meaning that old ſerpent called the devil, and Satan, as he is expreſsly characterized in the preceding chapter, *gave him his power and his ſeat, and great authority*, raiſing him to ſovereign dominion, and making him the great inſtrument of his power and agency through the wide extent of the Roman empire in the weſt.

Ver. 3. *And I ſaw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly*

being pagan and idolatrous, the Jewiſh only excepted. It is therefore an expreſſion of the ſame kind with many others which have been taken notice of by ſcripture critics: ſuch as when Jephtha is ſaid to have been buried in *the cities of Gilead*, that is, in *one* of them; and where Chriſt is ſpoken of as riding *upon an aſs, and a colt the foal of an aſs*, when only one of them could be meant.

deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beaſt.

This, as will afterwards appear, was the ſixth, or imperial head, which *was wounded to death*, when Auguſtulus was dethroned by the king of the Heruli, and the imperial government deſtroyed at Rome. But this deadly wound *was healed*, when both the magnificence, and power, of the imperial government were reſtored, though under ſomewhat of a different form, in the ſeventh, or papal head; and ſuch was then the influence of the beaſt, that, as by a kind of univerſal enchantment, he drew all the world in admiration after him.

Ver. 4. *And they worſhipped the dragon which gave power unto the beaſt; and they worſhipped the beaſt, ſaying, Who is like*

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like unto the beaſt? Who is able to make war with him?

This admiration degenerated into abject and idolatrous ſubmiſſion; *for they worſhipped the beaſt*, and, in doing ſo, they in effect worſhipped the dragon alſo, that is the devil himſelf, *who gave him power.* Their very language is the language of idolatry: They ſay, *Who is like unto the beaſt? Who is able to make war with him?* aſcribing to him, peerleſs might, and grandeur.

Ver. 5. *And there was given unto him a mouth ſpeaking great things, and blaſphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

This deſcribes his arrogant pretentions to ſupereminent dignity, his aſſuming lofty and blaſphemous titles, his laying claim even to divine prerogatives; and, what is a great

great and inexplicable myſtery, his being allowed to proſper and to prevail (a), to the great injury of the faithful, for the ſpace of forty-two prophetical months, making the ſame period that was formerly mentioned of 1260 years.

Ver. 6. *And he opened his mouth in blaſphemy againſt God, to blaſpheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

His impious boaſting roſe to ſuch a pitch, that it may with great propriety be called *blaſphemy againſt God, and againſt his name.* He likewiſe execrated *his tabernacle*, that is to ſay, his church, on earth; which was then in her wilderneſs ſtate, in

 which

(a) It has been repeatedly and juſtly obſerved by expoſitors, that ποιησαι is to be underſtood here in this large and emphatical ſenſe, as Daniel uſed the correſponding word in his prophecies: ſee Dan. viii. 12. and xi. 7.

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which God dwells as in a tabernacle (a): and he degraded the character of the *ſaints and angels in heaven*, by making them interceſſors with God, and objects of idolatrous worſhip.

Ver. 7. *And it was given unto him to make war with the ſaints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

He was permitted to exerciſe his cruelties againſt the ſaints, to ſuch a degree, as appeared almoſt to deſtroy

(a) See 2 Cor. vi. 16. Though I will not affirm, in oppoſition to worthy expoſitors, that the ſpirit of prophecy had not an eye here to the abſurd, as well as impious, doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; yet I prefer the ſenſe given in the comment as more warrantable from ſcripture; becauſe I do not find that our Lord's *glorious* body, to which the above doctrine relates, is there repreſented as a tabernacle.

ſtroy them: and his tyranny reached to a vaſt extent, over the various *kindreds, and tongues, and nations*, into which the Roman empire had been divided.

Ver. 8. *And all that dwell upon the earth ſhall worſhip him, whoſe names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb ſlain from the founaation of the world.*

This is the conſequence of his univerſal domination: the people every where, through his wide extended empire, were to be brought into the moſt humiliating ſubjection: their very minds and conſciences were to be enſlaved, and they were all to look up unto him as a God upon the earth: the redeemed of the Lord alone excepted, whoſe names were regiſtered, from the foundation of the world, in the book

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book of life of the Lamb that was ſlain (*).

Ver. 9. *If any man have an ear, let him hear.*

This is a ſolemn note of attention to every perſon of ſpiritual diſcernment. The truths which have been repreſented are awfully affecting. That corruption ſhould ſpread its influence ſo wide, and that the ſaints ſhould be ſo oppreſſed by a powerful and unrelenting foe, afford indeed but very melancholy reflections. But let the Chriſtian look

(*) Let the thoughtful reader conſider, whether it is not more to the purpoſe of this viſion, to give the reaſon why the ſaints were preſerved pure in the midſt of ſurrounding corruption, in their having been choſen for a holy treaſure to the Lord from the foundation of the world, than to ſpeak of Chriſt as ſlain typically in the ſacrifices that were offered ſince the fall of man, and then judge which is the ſenſe of this paſſage.

look forward to the end of these calamities, and ponder what the spirit of prophecy immediately subjoins: CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 10. *He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.*

Then he shall perceive that this haughty persecuting power shall be brought down to destruction, and the people of God delivered from his hands; and when it is considered that those who maintain their integrity in the midst of all these temptations, have the witness in themselves that they are destined to happiness, what can be a stronger encouragement to exercise patience, and to place their trust and confidence in the Lord.

Nothing can be more evident, than

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than that this monſtrous animal repreſents the different kingdoms into which the Roman empire was broken down and divided, all harmonized and united under the ſovereign pontiff, notwithſtanding their different and ſometimes oppoſite intereſts. This produced a government of ſo ſtrange and ſingular a nature, that one ſhould think it ſcarcely poſſible to miſtake the meaning of a deſcription, ſo remarkably adapted to all its diſtinguiſhing characters. The ſeat of this government is plainly fixed at Rome, the ſeven hilled city. It was the ſeventh form of government which had exiſted in that city. It was exerciſed over ten different kingdoms into which the empire had been divided; which have been enumerated, though with ſome trifling differences, by almoſt all expoſitors. Its authority was the greateſt

greateſt that ever the world beheld; for not only the people in general, but the greateſt princes and monarchs, were in abſolute ſubjection to it; and even their crowns and kingdoms entirely at its diſpoſal. The head of this government laid claim to divine perfection: nay, to uſe the language of ſcripture, *ſitting in the temple of God, he exalted himſelf above all that is called God, or that is worſhipped;* and, pretending to be the father and the guide of the church, he perſecuted its genuine members with the moſt unrelenting cruelty.

When we look into the papal hiſtory, we ſee theſe characters exhibited in a long detail. The biſhop of Rome early aſpired to power and pre-eminence; and his influence ſo rapidly increaſed, that, before the end of the ſixth century, it became an object of anxiety and apprehenſion

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prehenſion to the Roman emperor himſelf. In the year 606, the title of univerſal biſhop was confered upon him by Phocas, an execrable tyrant and parricide. But he had exerciſed the prerogative long before. The rich and extenſive patrimony which belonged to the See of Rome, enabled the Roman Pontiff to maintain a ſplendor, ſuited to the dignity he had aſſumed. What contributed much to his aggrandiſement, in this early period, was the weak and impolitic conduct of the emperor Leo Iſauricus, in iſſuing an edict againſt the worſhip of images, and requiring them every where to be pulled down. The enforcing of this edict kindled a war in Italy: the emperor was exaſperated: Gregory II. at that time Pope, whom his jealouſy had imprudently threatened, and whoſe life he had attempted, ſtrenuouſly exhorted

ed the people to continue ſtedfaſt in the faith. Their ſpirits were inflamed; the cities of Italy revolted, and the Romans, chooſing magiſtrates for themſelves, became a diſtinct body politic, with the Pope at their head. In the year 756, Pepin, king of France, put the Pope in poſſeſſion of the exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis, a conſiderable track of country now known by the name of Marca d'Ancona. But it was not till the year 876, that he became a temporal prince; when the ſovereignty of thoſe parts was yielded to St. Peter by Charles the bald. Yet it was not from his becoming a temporal prince, a circumſtance upon which commentators lay ſo much ſtreſs, that he derived that extraordinary power which he poſſeſſed. It was from the progreſs of ſuperſtition and the in-

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fluence he thereby obtained over the minds of the people.

So great was the weight of his authority, that, ſeveral years before his getting the grant of the territories already mentioned, the crown of France, in conſequence of his deciſion, was transferred from one race of kings unto another; and, in the year 796, he had the addreſs to raiſe Charlemaigne to the imperial dominion, by putting an imperial crown upon his head while he was kneeling at the altar, and holding him forth to the people as crowned by the hand of God. Theſe however were only the infant exertions of his ambition. He afterwards laid claim to infallibilty, and to ſupreme and univerſal dominion. He aſſumed the moſt blaſphemous titles; moſt holy, and moſt bleſſed; the lord of the univerſe, the father of kings, and the light of the world.

And

And ſuch was his inſolence of power, that we find him, at length, dethroning and excommunicating princes, and threatening with the ſevereſt puniſhments, all who ventured to diſpute his authority, or diſregard his commands. The kings and potentates of this world were now entirely at his beck. Theſe he employed as the inſtruments of his fury, to execute his vengeance againſt the ſaints. The cruelties which he exerciſed upon them were unparalleled. Let the vallies of Piedmont and its neighbourhood, the foreſts of Germany, and almoſt every country in Europe, bear witneſs, what multitudes of innocent victims have fallen by his murderous hands. Indeed ſuch was the horrid ſucceſs of his perſecutions, that, at one period, he ſeems to have almoſt exterminated the holy progeny from the earth; ſo completely

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pletely was the prophecy fulfilled, *that he ſhould make war with the ſaints and overcome them* (a).

VISION

(a) There is little diverſity of opinion among expoſitors reſpecting *the beaſt* itſelf which this prophecy deſcribes. They differ widely however about *the head that was wounded*, and *the healing of his deadly wound*. Mede, Durham, and Waple underſtand it of the *ſixth* head, which they think was wounded to death in the fall of idolatry under the Chriſtian emperors; and that it was *healed* by the reſtoration of idolatry under the papal dominion. Jurieu, Lowman, Napier, and Biſhop Newton interpret *its being wounded*, of the fall of the imperial government at Rome. But the two former underſtand *its being healed*, of the revival of a ſimilar government under the popes, while the two latter underſtand it of the empire being again reſtored under Charlemaigne. Againſt all theſe interpretations Vitringa objects, as Pareus had done before him, that they make the beaſt to be wounded before he exiſted: He likewiſe thinks, *that the head which was wounded*, is that which muſt be healed. He further underſtands the *ſeven heads of the beaſt*, to be ſeven popes,

Popes, who diſtinguiſhed themſelves, by raiſing the authority of the Romiſh church to the higheſt pitch, and by perſecuting the ſaints and triumphing over them. Of theſe, he thinks five were before the reformation, namely Gregory VII. Alexander III. Innocent III. Boniface VIII. and John XXII. two after the reformation, Paul III. and Paul V He ſuppoſes that Alexander III the firſt perſecutor of the Waldenſes, was *the head that was wounded to death*, in the ſeventeen years oppreſſion which he ſuffered from the emperor Frederic Brazen Beard, as he was called; and particularly in the diſaſtrous defeat of his allies and of the Romans, many thouſands of whom periſhed by the arms of Frederic, while he himſelf with difficulty made his eſcape. But, after all, he obſerves, he triumphed over the emperor at Venice, who there threw himſelf at Alexander's feet, deprecated his vengeance, and worſhipped him: and hence the papal authority immenſely increaſed in the judgement of the people. Behold then, ſays this learned expoſitor, the head of the beaſt wounded to death, and, contrary to all human expectation, healed.

VISION OF THE TWO HORNED BEAST.

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Ver. 11. *And I beheld another beaſt coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he ſpake as a dragon.*

This beaſt, in like manner as the former, is to be underſtood of a body politic. He is repreſented *with two horns like a lamb*, denoting the twofold power which he aſſumed, of opening and ſhutting the gates of heaven and hell at his pleaſure; and, delineating at the ſame time one of his principal features, that, under the colour of the moſt artleſs ſimplicity and mildneſs, he ſhould have the audacity to ſpeak like a dragon; diſcovering both his ſubtilty

tilty and his virulence as occaſion required. He is further repreſented, *as coming up out of the earth*, which has been commonly underſtood, to denote his growing up in a ſilent and imperceptible manner, as a plant out of the ground. But the idea of the growth of a plant is certainly very incongruous to that of an animal aſcending, or riſing up, out of the earth. Is it not ſufficient for the purpoſe of this viſion, while it alſo preſerves the propriety of the figure, to ſuppoſe him making his appearance in a ſituation which was fitted to ſupply plenty of proviſion to nouriſh him. This therefore, I conceive, is the natural and adequate interpretation. But if we are to puſh it to any further meaning, I ſhould chooſe to underſtand it as ſignifying, that this extraordinary animal aroſe out of the rich temporalities which the clergy

at

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at that time enjoyed. This beaſt appears likewiſe to be intimately connected, if not united, with the former: therefore it is added,

Ver. 12. *And he exerciſed all the power of the firſt beaſt before him. and cauſeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worſhip the firſt beaſt, whoſe deadly wound was healed.*

The power of the firſt beaſt, which the other is here ſaid to exerciſe, muſt be underſtood of a power equal to that which was derived from the combined influence of the potentates of this world; and it was exerciſed *before him*, that is, in honour of him *; and was indeed the means by which he roſe to his greatneſs. He *likewiſe cauſed the inbitants*

* So the original word is uſed, Luke iv. 7. and it is the only ſenſe in which it can here be underſtood.

bitants of the earth, wherever the influence of his enſlaving doctrine extended, or the terrors of his threatenings reached, to *worſhip the firſt beaſt*, as he now appeared in a new and aſtoniſhing form, healed of his deadly wound, and beyond all expectation entering on the poſſeſſion of ſovereign and univerſal dominion.

Ver. 13. *And he doth great wonders, ſo that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the ſight of men.*

Ver. 14. *And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of thoſe miracles which he had power to do in the ſight of the beaſt, ſaying to them that dwell on the earth, that they ſhould make an image to the beaſt which had the wound by a ſword, and did live.*

The wonders which he performed, however, were only falſe and ly-

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ing wonders. But he knew that, in thoſe times of ignorance, they would produce the deſired effect, in confounding the ſenſes of the people, ſo that at length he might attempt his daring project of terrifying them outright, by appearing to *bring down fire from heaven in their preſence.* Nay, we are told, that by theſe pretended miracles, which he performed in honour of the beaſt, he deceived to ſuch a degree *them that dwelt upon the earth*, meaning the people under his influence, as to make them enter into his views, in *making an image to the beaſt*, who was now beginning to live under another head, notwithſtanding his former head being wounded to death. The word rendered *image*, in this place, ſeems to be uſed, to ſignify a model, or pattern, after which any thing is

is to be made (a); and ſuch an image for the ſeven headed monſter, we ſhall afterward obſerve, this lamb-like beaſt did actually form (b). But what is very extraordinary, the pattern which he formed he had the faculty of endowing with life, or ſpirit, that it could enforce its example, and carry it into effect. This extraordinary circumſtance the apoſtle immediately deſcribes;

Ver. 15. *And he had power to give life unto the image of the beaſt, that the image of the beaſt ſhould both ſpeak, and cauſe that as many as would not worſhip the image of the beaſt ſhould be killed.*

His

(a) So the correſponding Hebrew term is uſed, Gen. i. 26. and in ſome other paſſages.

(b) When the people are ſaid *to have made* this image, the meaning can only be, that they *conſented* to its formation; for we find that this beaſt gave life to the image, which he would never have done if it had not been of his own framing.

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His *ſpeaking* muſt here be underſtood of commending, and magnifying himſelf; and all in reference to the character and domination of the beaſt, which he was formed to raiſe and to ſupport. Therefore it was neceſſary, that the people ſhould pay a veneration to him. This he indiſpenſably required; and he contrived that all who would not do ſo, ſhould be put to death It muſt not be forgotten, however, that this power, the image had not of himſelf, but it was communicated to him by the two-horned beaſt; of the influence and tyranny of whoſe character the two following verſes complete the deſcription.

Ver. 16. *And he cauſeth all, both ſmall and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads*:

Ver.

Ver. 17. *And that no man might buy or ſell ſave he that had the mark, or the name of the beaſt, or the number of his name.*

The general meaning of this deſcription is abundantly plain; that ſuch was his intolerance and oppreſſion, that no perſon, of whatever rank or condition he might be, could exerciſe even the common offices of civil life, without giving unequivocal evidence of his being a devoted ſlave to the ſeven headed monſter, and to that ſyſtem of tyranny and ſuperſtition which he maintained. This is what we are to underſtand by *his mark, or his name,* or the *number of his name;* and, as almoſt every expoſitor has obſerved, it is an alluſion to the marks, or names, or numbers, that were worn by ancient idolaters, and ſoldiers, and ſlaves.

Ver.

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Ver. 18. *Here is wiſdom. Let him that hath underſtanding count the number of the beaſt; for it is the number of a man; and his number is ſix hundred threeſcore and ſix.*

There is perhaps no part of theſe prophecies, where expoſitors have gone into a greater variety of opinions, than that which we have now been ſurveying. The general character, however, which it deſcribes is ſufficiently obvious. Its diſtinguiſhing and prominent features may be clearly traced in the character and conduct of the Romiſh clergy, regarded in their official capacity. They appeared with the meekneſs and innocence of a lamb; while they betrayed all the cunning and audacity of the ſerpent. In the garb of humility they carried on the plans of ambition and

and in the ſemblance of ſimplicity ſecretly managed the great engines of ſuperſtition and tyranny. Let their hiſtory bear teſtimony to the truth of theſe aſſertions. Their leading object has been, to aggrandize their order, by exalting the temporal and ſpiritual dominion of the head of their church. With this view they made men believe that their eternal ſalvation depended upon him; they exhibited him as a Deity upon earth; they aſcribed to him characters which belong to God alone, and powers that extended to heaven and to hell. Conſidered as partaking of this high authority, they were themſelves regarded with the moſt profound ſubmiſſion, and obtained an unbounded influence over the minds of the people. They even aſcribed to themſelves the power of working miracles; and ſo confidently was this power claimed,

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claimed, and ſo generally was it allowed them, that it was commonly appealed to as a deciſive proof that the church of Chriſt was to be found among them, and them alone. It is a moſt appropriate ſtroke therefore in the deſcription of this beaſt *that he doth great wonders, ſo that he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of theſe miracles.* Thoſe miracles were moſt commonly performed through the intervention of relics. Relics, even ſo early as the latter part of the ſixth century, were held in great veneration. Dupin informs us that St. Gregory, who about that time filled the papal chair, refuſed to ſend ſome to the empreſs Conſtantina; aſſuring her that they were not to be approached without terror; and giving her ſeveral inſtances of their awful effects. Their interdicts, and indulgences, their abſolutions, and excomunications,

cations, were powerful engines in the hands of thoſe artful and ambitious men, and, for many ages, were employed with conſummate art, and daring effrontery, to fill the coffers, and confirm the domination of the church. By theſe they reached men of every rank and every character; they ſubjugated the loftieſt minds, they over-awed the higheſt authorities, and thus raiſed up a ſupreme and univerſal empire under the ſeven headed beaſt.

To the aggrandizement of that monſter the church-men effectually contributed by the image, or portrait, which they drew of him in the decrees of councils, in the canons of the church, and in the whole of the doctrine which they taught reſpecting him; all theſe tending to bring the powers of this world into harmonious ſubjection

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to the ſovereign pontiff, as their ſupreme and infallible head. To this image they gave life and vigour, by the ardour of ſuperſtition, and by the terror of anathemas; but laſt of all, by the infernal tribunal of the inquiſition, by means of which they filled the minds of the people with conſternation and awe. This was the moſt dreadful engine of cruelty which had ever been invented. The deſign of it was to prevent the teaching of hereſy, even in private; and the means employed were tortures, which incarnate demons alone ſeemed capable of deviſing!

From the whole of this hiſtory it is evident, that every poſſible endeavour was made to prevent any perſon from enjoying the common benefit of ſociety, or even of life itſelf, without an abject ſubmiſſion to the beaſt, and bearing the mark of ſubmiſſion viſible to all. How exact the

the agreement between the hiſtory and the prophecy in every part of this deſcription. Can we then entertain a doubt of our having diſcovered the true ſymbolical meaning of this beaſt, as well as of the former. Let it be obſerved, however, that tho' this beaſt was poſterior to the former in the order of theſe viſions, yet he was in fact before him. The ſpirit of prophecy firſt ſets forth the ſeven headed beaſt in all the height of his greatneſs, and then, under the emblem of another beaſt, ſucceeding him indeed in viſion, but to appear before him, and to continue with him during the whole of his reign, he points out the progreſs of his advancement, and the means by which it was completed. It is the want of attention to this circumſtance, and to the ſenſe in which the term *image* is here to be underſtood, that has plunged expoſitors into endleſs

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endleſs embarraſſment, and driven them into ſuch a perplexing variety of interpretations.

Let us now reflect a moment upon this intereſting, but melancholy ſcene. How ſtupendous that wiſdom, which, by ſo apt and natural a figure, could delineate, ſo many ages before, the ſteps by which antichriſt aſcended to his ſuper-imperial throne! How monſtrous that ſuperſtition, which could miniſter to the height of his vaſt and unparalleled tyranny, and enable him, almoſt without arms, without territory, without forces, to extend his dominion over the kingdoms of the earth, and hold equally the princes and the people in entire ſubjection! And how dreadful that depravation, which could call in the aid of religion itſelf to the commiſſion of the moſt horrid impieties, and the moſt enormous crimes! Can this then be

be any other than the character of him *whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the truth that they might be ſaved.* What an awful example have we here preſented to our view of the danger, as well as the wickedneſs, of grafting Chriſtianity upon the policy of this world, in oppoſition to our Lord's expreſs declaration, *that his kingdom is not of this world.* Such an incongruous coalition can produce nothing but corruption, and we ſee it is impoſſible to ſay to what extent that corruption may go (a).

(a) It is not an eaſy matter, to arrange diſtinctly, the various opinions of interpreters, reſpecting the meaning of this viſion I ſpeak not of the wild extravagance of thoſe who have ſought for the *two horned beaſt* among heatheniſh prieſts and magicians,

magicians, or among the deluſions of Mahomet. I take notice only of the opinions of thoſe who have formed a more probable judgement. The general run of expoſitors have underſtood this beaſt to be nothing more than another deſcription of antichriſt under a different form. Napier ſo underſtands it; and interprets the *two horns* of his ſpiritual and temporal power. This ſeems likewiſe to have been the opinion of Jurieu, Forbes, and Durham, who likewiſe interpret this beaſt in general of antichriſt, only they ſeem to underſtand his two horns as denoting his hypocriſy, that, under the humility and ſimplicity of the lamb, he ſhould exert the ſubtilty and power of the dragon. Mede, Waple, and Newton, underſtand this beaſt to denote the Roman hierarchy, though they differ conſiderably in the ſenſe which they aſcribe to his horns. The firſt, interprets them of his twofold power of binding and looſing: the ſecond, of the two co-ordinate hierarchies of the eaſtern and weſtern empire: the third, of the two bodies of regulars and ſeculars in the Romiſh church. Lowman makes this beaſt to ſignify the temporal juriſdictions and royalties, which were annexed to many biſhoprics in Germany, and which have long had ſo much weight in the affairs of the empire This coalition of powers, he ſeems to think, likewiſe, is the image of the beaſt which is afterwards deſcribed,

ed, as it reſembles the powers of the papacy, or firſt beaſt, and has been conſtantly employed to promote his intereſt. With reſpect to the image of the beaſt in this prophecy, Napier underſtands it of the new empire under Charlemagne, which, he thinks, was an image of the former one under the Roman emperors. Mede interprets it of the ten horned beaſt, or the papal empire, underſtanding by the firſt beaſt, of which it was an image, the Pagan Roman empire; and he is followed by Durham, Jurieu, and Waple. Theſe expoſitors, however, ſeem not to have conſidered, that the beaſt is ſtill the ſame beaſt when he appeared under the ſeventh, as he was under the ſixth head, and therefore, this interpretation is chargeable with the evident impropriety of making a thing the image of itſelf. Biſhop Newton again, following Cocceius, makes this image to ſignify the pope himſelf; which, as Markius juſtly obſerves, deſtroys the propriety of the figure altogether; unleſs we could ſuppoſe that a prince could be the image of a kingdom, or the head the image of the body: though his own fancy, that it ſignifies the pope's legates, is little more ſatisfying. Notwithſtanding the length of this note, I cannot withhold from the curious reader the opinion of the learned Vitringa. By the two horned beaſt, he underſtands the Franciſcan and Dominican Friars, eſpecially the latter; by its horns,

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their preaching and their miracles; and by the image of the beaſt, the tribunal of the inquiſition, which he calls a moſt wicked and deteſtable inſtitution; in which there is the livelieſt repreſentation of the ſupreme authority which the Romiſh church uſurps over the conſciences of men, and of the tyranny which ſhe exerciſes over the people.

DISSERT-

DISSERTATION III.

ON THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST.

Ver. 18. *Here is wiſdom. Let him that hath underſtanding count the number of the beaſt; for it is the number of a man; and his number is ſix hundred threeſcore and ſix.*

Perhaps none of the apocalyptic myſteries are more hard to reſolve than this one upon which we are now to enter. Of this, its having employed the attention of learned and ingenious men for ſo many centuries,

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centuries, to ſo little effect, is a diſcouraging proof. We ought not, however, to give up the matter in deſpair: on the contrary, we ought, by all means, to endeavour to form an opinion reſpecting it. Every miſtaken attempt to penetrate into its meaning will be like the ſhutting up of a falſe entry, till, at laſt, none but the true one will be left.

It may be proper, firſt of all, to take notice of the methods which have been chiefly employed, to give a ſatisfying illuſtration of this curious point.

A numerous claſs of commentators go upon the principle of finding out the name of the beaſt, in a word, the letters of which ſhall form the number here laid down: and the words Lateinos, Romiith, Ludovicus, and many others have been produced as ſuch. This mode of interpretation is as early as the

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the time of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, by whom it seems first to have been suggested, and it has been followed in modern times by Napier, Daubuz, Bp. Newton, and many others. Dissert. III.

I believe, however, it has scarcely given satisfaction to any intelligent inquirer. The great variety of words in which this number may be found, renders it loose, and inconsequential. It will apply equally, and the application of it has indeed been made, to Pagans and Mahometans, as well as to antichrist. But the severest confutation of it is that the Papists have shewn, in some instances, that it may be applied even to protestants themselves.

Others have gone cabalistically to work upon this dark and difficult question, by interpreting the meaning of the name, or word, upon which they fix, such as *Adonikam*,

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nikam, which ſignifies *a Lord riſing up*, and whoſe family conſiſted of 666, Ezra ii. 13. and *Sethur*, Numb. xiii. 13. the letters of this number is found, and which ſignifies *hidden* or *myſtery*. This mode of interpretation was introduced by Mr. Broughton, the great Engliſh Rabbi, in Queen Elizabeth's time, and it has been adopted by Lightfoot, Vitringa, and others. It ſeems however as little ſatisfactory as the former. The circumſtances of coincidence, in all the examples that have yet been propoſed, are too ſlight and trivial to have been pointed at by the ſpirit of prophecy, in this important and inſtructive enigma.

This has led ſome curious inquirers to aſſume a principle different from either of the former, and to conſider this number as characteriſtic of the falſe church in the ſame manner as the number 144,000

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(chap. xiv. i.) is characteriſtic of the true. In this claſs we may rank the names of Forbes, Mede, Durham, and Potter, which laſt has been followed by many others. This ingenious man fell upon the device of reducing the numbers to their reſpective roots. The ſquare root of 144 is 12, which denotes the true apoſtolic church, and conveys the idea of perfect ſymmetry and perfect firmneſs. The neareſt ſquare root of 666 is 25, which ſignifies that antichriſt ſhould be a body politic which ſhould as much affect the number 25 as its diſtinguiſhing number, as God ſeems to have employed the number 12, in eſtabliſhing his church. This the learned author ſpecifies in a great variety of inſtances. He tells us they made 25 gates to the city Rome; they divided the city at firſt into 25 pariſhes, over which they ſet

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ſet 25 cardinals, in 25 churches; and at laſt their creed was compriſed in 25 articles; beſides ſeveral other things of leſs importance. This is perhaps ſpecious, but I am afraid it will not ſtand the teſt of a ſtrict examination. It is to little purpoſe to tell us what has taken place in the city Rome, for no perſon ſuppoſes that this is the extent of the papal hierarchy or dominion; and yet matters have been greatly altered in this reſpect, even in that city. It is no extraordinary thing, ſurely, to find almoſt any particular number repeatedly occurring amongſt an endleſs variety of objects, and through a long period of time. Almoſt all the inſtances which have been mentioned have changed in number during the courſe of that period; and ſome of them, particularly the addition of the 25th gate, took place before the

the man of ſin was properly revealed. But after all, how does this reſolve the hard and difficult queſtion? If 25 is the diſtinguiſhing and favourite number, the ſquare of it is only 625, and by no rules of arithmetic, without a moſt arbitrary addition, is it poſſible to bring out of it that diſtinguiſhing number, by which this apocalyptic beaſt is characterized.

Laſtly, there are ſome who reject all theſe methods of calculation, for the ſimple and plauſible opinion, that the number 666 reſpects the time of antichriſt's riſe. This they calculate in various ways, according to their ſeveral hypotheſes. This was the opinion of Bullinger, and Nathaniel Stevens, and it has been followed by Lowman and other commentators. I ſhall only obſerve reſpecting it; that the queſtion is evidently propoſed as a trial of wiſ-

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dom; *Let him that hath underſtanding count the number of the beaſt*, but if it contained nothing more than this plain and eaſy import, it would certainly require no great ſhare either of wiſdom, or underſtanding to find it out.

It may perhaps be thought preſumptuous to attempt to ſolve this difficult problem, when the endeavours of the learned, the judicious, the penetrating, and the ingenious, ſeem entirely to have failed. But is it not propoſed to our attentive and ſerious enquiry? Is not the ſcripture ſtudent exhorted to ſearch out its meaning? Let us not therefore ſhrink from the duty to which we are called, becauſe the labours of others have not been crowned with ſucceſs. In order, if poſſible, to diſcover its hidden import, I would obſerve, that, whatever our mode of calculation may be, it muſt evolve

evolve the diſtinctive characters of antichriſt, of which it is certainly the ſymbol. And what are his diſtinctive, and moſt prominent characters? Has he not been diſtinguiſhed, through the whole of his reign, by the moſt enormous ſuperſtition, and the moſt inſolent and unrelenting tyranny? Add to this, a blaſphemy which is tremendous, and you complete the deſcription. Whatever therefore exhibits theſe in a conſpicuous light, gives us a view of antichriſt in his grand and diſtinguiſhing features. I obſerve farther upon this myſterious point, that nothing is more inſiſted upon, in this book of prophecy, as characteriſtical of the antichriſtian ſtate, than that of ancient Babylon. If therefore we find any thing *there*, that comes up to the import of this paſſage, it is an additional evidence

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that we have hit upon its real meaning.

Now, in ſurveying the hiſtory of that ancient ſtate, *the image on the plains of Dura*, ſpoken of by Daniel the prophet, ſeizes our attention as probably much to our purpoſe. It was 60 cubits high, and 6 cubits broad. It was made of gold. All nations were commanded to fall down and worſhip it. And, if any perſon refuſed, he was to be caſt into the midſt of a burning furnace. Here was a ſuperſtition, great and magnificent: It was enforced likewiſe by a tyranny, ſevere and unfeeling; and it was attended with a blaſphemy moſt audacious and ſhocking: For who is that God, ſaid Nebuchadnezzar, that ſhall deliver you out of my hands? What a ſtriking emblem is this of the leading characters of the papal beaſt. Let us blend, or incorporate it with his

his monſtrous figure, as it is deſcribed at the beginning of this chapter, and we ſhall ſee the number come out exactly as the apoſtle has ſtated it. Nothing can be more natural and ſimple than this operation. In multiplying the height of this image by the ten horns of the beaſt, we have the number 600: and in multiplying the breadth of the image, by the ten horns, and by the laſt head of the beaſt, the only one which denotes antichriſt, that is to ſay in multiplying the breadth by 11, we have the number 66; the two together amounting to 666, the very number that is here put down. By this eaſy operation, we ſee the ſpirit of ancient Babylon transfuſed, with increaſed energy, into her monſtrous antitype. By the firſt multiplication, we perceive that the ſuperſtition of myſtical Babylon ſhould be of a far more gigantic ſize

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than that of ancient Babylon, even as ten is greater than one; and by the ſecond multiplication, we learn that this enormous ſuperſtition, together with the tyranny with which it was continued, and by which it was ſupported, was to extend, in one great body, over all the kingdoms which belonged to the beaſt; and was to be entirely under the management of antichriſt as the governing head, which carried blaſphemy upon it, as its very name. Here then we have a ſolution of this very difficult queſtion, which, while it gives us the exact number of the beaſt which the apoſtle puts down, exhibits a moſt ſtriking picture of antichriſt in all his diſtinguiſhing features. It ſhews that the ſpirit of God does not deal in cabaliſtical conceits about names, and words, and letters, and the ſecret powers of numbers, according to the interpreta-

terpretations which have been commonly given; but that, while we have the number entire by which the beaſt is denoted, we have it connected with a ſet of characters, which are not only applicable to him in the cleareſt manner, but which diſtinguiſh him from every other power which has appeared in the world.

There are ſeveral other circumſtances by which this interpretation may be corroborated. Firſt of all, I ſubmit it to the judgement of the curious inquirer, whether there is not a note of diſcovery to be obſerved in the intimation concerning the number of the beaſt, when we are told that it is the *number of a man*. Nebuchadnezzar's image is allowed to have been of human form, and when its number is blended with that of this monſtrous animal, it gives us *again* the number of antichriſt

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chriſt, which is the number of a man. Nebuchadnezzar's image likewiſe was worſhipped with all manner of muſical inſtruments; this happily repreſents the well known pomp and pageantry of antichriſt in his idolatrous worſhip. The image, we are farther told, was made of gold, and, as has been thought, even the gold of the temple of Jeruſalem was employed to make it; and does not this moſt ſtrikingly ſet forth, how antichriſt has perverted the pure and ſacred materials of heavenly truth, to erect a ſyſtem of corruption, the moſt tremendous that ever the world beheld. Thoſe who refuſed to worſhip Nebuchadnezzar's image, were three children of the captivity: likewiſe thoſe who firſt oppoſed antichriſt were three, whom he thought he had held in captivity under him. Firſt the Waldenſes and Albigenſes,

Albigenſes, who are ſcarcely to be diſtinguiſhed from one another: and ſoon after the Bohemian brethren and Wickliff, with his followers in England: Finally the three children were to be burnt with fire, and it is not a little remarkable that burning with fire ſeems to have been a favourite method of deſtroying heretics under the papal perſecution. Let me only further obſerve, that, if we ſuppoſe that this image was intended by the ſpirit of prophecy to lead us to the ſolution of this curious and inſtructive enigma, we ſee an important reaſon for Daniel's being ſo minute and particular as to give us the exact number of its dimenſions, for which upon any other principle no reaſon can be aſſigned. Nor can the great diſproportion of it parts be accounted for, but by its being intended to indicate, that the ſyſ-

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tem of ſuperſtition and tyranny, of which it was the model, and which was afterwards to riſe to ſuch an extravagant pitch ſhould at length be cruſhed down by its own enormous weight.

VISION

VISION OF THE LAMB AND HIS REDEEMED WITH HIM.

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Ver. 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb ſtood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thouſand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*

Here we are preſented with a view of the true church of Chriſt emerging from that ſtate of obſcurity in which ſhe had been hid for ages. The apoſtle beheld her as a ſeparate ſociety, ſtationed on

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mount Sion, the ancient emblem of her ſtability and elevation, with the Lamb, as her Prince and Saviour, at her head. This ſociety had *his Father's name written in their foreheads*, ſignifying, that they were the choſen people of God, and conſecrated to his honour: the number *an hundred forty and four thouſand* of which they were compoſed, is perhaps intended to intimate, that they are the ſame ſelect apoſtolical ſociety who were ſet apart and ſealed with the ſeal of God at the beginning of the apoſtacy, and, O aſtoniſhing effect of the power and grace of JEHOVAH, are now produced entire and unſpotted, notwithſtanding all the abominations which had ſo univerſally prevailed. When they thus appeared, heaven itſelf ſeems to have been moved at the ſight; for the apoſtle adds,

Ver. 2.

Ver 2. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

Ver. 3. *And they ſung as it were a new ſong before the throne, and before the four beaſts, and the elders; and no man could learn that ſong, but the hundred and forty and four thouſand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

The heavenly church, upon this occaſion, tuned their voices and their harps together. The ſymphony was beyond deſcription grand and ſolemn. It ſtruck the ear of our aſtoniſhed prophet like the diſtant mingled ſound of many waters ruſhing, or like the rolling noiſe of a mighty thunder. Theſe, however, were ſo delightfully modulated, that they ſeemed at the ſame time,

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time, as if they had been played upon any of the ſweeteſt muſical inſtruments. In this admirable way, *a new ſong*, as if it had been made for the occaſion, was ſung by the celeſtial choir, in the preſence of JEHOVAH, expreſſive of the praiſes of that grace, by which this favourite ſociety had been ſo wonderfully preſerved; a ſong therefore accommodated to their experience and feelings, and which none other upon earth could either adopt, or underſtand. The following diſtinction of their character completes the deſcription.

Ver. 4. *Theſe are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. Theſe are they which follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth. Theſe were redeemed from among men, being the firſt fruits unto God, and to the Lamb.*

Ver. 5. *And in their mouth was found*

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no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Theſe perſons were diſtinguiſhed from the whole of the corrupt maſs that ſurrounded them, by a variety of prominent and characteriſtical features. As chaſte virgins to Chriſt, they kept themſelves pure from all pollutions of idols, repreſented in prophecy by the defilements of fornication. Their whole principles and conduct were regulated entirely by the doctrine and laws of Chriſt: to him they adhered, with the moſt inviolable attachment, in every ſituation, and thus *they followed the Lamb whitherſoever he went.* By ſeparating themſelves entirely from all connection with antichriſt, they were manifeſted as *the firſt-fruits of the redeemed* from his horrible bondage, which were afterwards to be followed with a plentiful

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tiful harveſt. Finally, they were found ſincere and *without offence before the throne of God*, however much they were traduced and condemned at the tribunals of the wicked.

This viſion points ſo evidently at the Waldenſes and Albigenſes, that I cannot heſitate in thus applying it.

Every circumſtance which it deſcribes agrees exactly with their character and hiſtory. It was chiefly in *their* ſequeſtered vallies, that the church obtained an aſylum, for ſo long a period, from the malice of her enemies: the whole world, they only excepted, having gone wandering after the beaſt. But, what is preciſely to our purpoſe, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, their numbers had greatly encreaſed, and they had ſpread their influence to a conſiderable extent. Then too, they appeared as a diſtinct

tinct and ſeparate ſociety, maintaining the purity and ſimplicity of Chriſtian faith and practice, which were every where elſe corrupted and debaſed; and thus, that part of the viſion, *the Lamb's ſtanding on mount Sion, with an hundred forty and four thouſand, having his Father's name on their foreheads*, was fully verified. They likewiſe abhorred and execrated the abominations of the Romiſh church; acknowledging only the authority of Chriſt in matters of religion, as appears by their confeſſions of faith, which are ſtill extant; and giving themſelves up entirely to his unerring direction, wherever he ſhould lead them, even if he ſhould bring them to ſuffering and to death, as their after perſecutions affectingly teſtify. How exact the deſcription then of their character in the ſtile of this prophecy! *Theſe are they who were not defiled with*

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women; and who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. One other circumstance remains to be taken notice of, which is, their holy and exemplary lives, the truth and certainty of which, their enemies themselves have unwillingly attested. One of of them for instance, declares "That it has contributed somewhat to the establishment of these Waldenses, that, except what they have done against the Romish faith and religion, in other things they lead almost a purer life than the rest of Christians." And another introduces his description of their character by observing, "That heretics are known by their manners and by their words, for they are regular in their manners and modest in their deportment:" upon which the venerable Usher, by whom these testimonies are collected, makes the following just and pertinent remark,

mark, ‘ moſt wretched times indeed when regularity of manners and modeſty of deportment are the diſtinguiſhing badges of heretics!’ But what completes the argument, theſe were the firſt people who aſſerted their independence of the Pope and of the Romiſh Councils, and obtained deliverance from that bondage; and therefore they are called, in this prophecy, *the firſt fruits unto God and to the Lamb.* The harveſt which has followed already, has not been inconſiderable: their doctrine ſpread abroad; the flames of perſecution were unable to deſtroy it: it made its progreſs into Germany, into Bohemia, and into Britain itſelf, and prepared the way for the reformation, about three centuries after, by which the rights of conſcience have been aſſerted, and the knowledge of the truth diffuſed through ſo many lands.

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How diſtinguiſhing the honour of theſe faithful followers of Chriſt in times of the greateſt difficulty and danger! They were indeed hated and perſecuted by a wicked world around them: but they were celebrated in heavenly ſong as beloved of God, and have been long ſince exalted to the higheſt happineſs in the joyful regions above, while their enemies have been ſuffering in the abodes of miſery and deſpair. Even in this world, their praiſes have gone abroad into all the churches, and their memory will be held in high eſtimation by the ſaints in every ſucceeding period unto the end of time. How encouraging, and edifying, the teſtimony they have here received! Let us, who have much leſs temptation to ſhake us, imitate their fidelity and

and firmneſs, and aſpire to their elevated and heavenly temper (a).

(a) Forbes underſtands this prophecy, of the church in her obſcure and lurking ſtate under antichriſt: But how then could ſhe be repreſented as appearing openly *with the Lamb upon mount Sion?* Paræus, Jurieu, and Bp. Newton, underſtand it of the church during the whole period from the riſe of antichriſt to the time of the reformation: but this interpretation is evidently liable in part to the ſame objection. Durham applies it to the Bohemians, as well as the Waldenſes; not conſidering, that thoſe were part of the increaſe after the firſt fruits had been gathered. Mede makes no particular application of it, but only conſiders it as a repreſentation of the church, as faithful to the Lamb, in the midſt of that world of nominal Chriſtians, who all followed the beaſt. Lowman conſiders it, as giving a view of the church, arrived at a ſtate of perfect religion and happineſs, in the heavenly world. The learned Vitringa ſo far takes it up in its juſt prophetical import, in applying it to the Waldenſes, particularly at the time when they broke off from the Romiſh church, and appeared openly againſt her. But he ſtrangely interprets *the harpers and the ſingers*

Jungers of Wickliff and his followers in England, and John Huſs, Jerom of Prague, and their followers in Germany; and after them the Taborites, and then the Bohemian brethren. He underſtands their ſong to be their confeſſion of faith, which none at that time could underſtand, or approve of but the Waldenſes alone. This he ſupports by the following curious paſſage of their hiſtory preſerved by Camerarius and Perrin. "The Bohemian brethren, the true remains of the Huſſites, having ſeparated entirely from the communion of the Romiſh church, when they underſtood that there was a ſmall body of the ancient Waldenſes in Auſtria, ſent two paſtors, and as many elders to them, to inquire into their doctrine, their diſcipline, and manner of life, who were joyfully received by the Waldenſes, and after explaining their faith and practice, they were made known to one another to their mutual conſolation. But the Waldenſes, having learned from the Bohemian brethren that there were ſome things in which they were ſtill deficient, for inſtance, that they did not ſufficiently avoid the communion of Popery, that they profeſſed Chriſt too timidly, and were too careful of worldly things, they received the admonition with thankfulneſs, and profited by it." This (ſays the ingenious expoſitor) was *to learn the ſong of the Bohemians.*

mians. But the interpretation is too forced to ſatisfy the plain and ſimple inquirer. I only further obſerve upon this viſion, that it is difficult to conceive, with Mede, that the name in their foreheads denoted baptiſm, when the papiſts had this badge as well as they; and ſo far from renouncing it when they received the mark of the beaſt, they placed a greater dependence on it than had been done before.

VISION

VISION OF THE ANGEL WITH THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL, &c.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 6. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,*

Ver. 7. *Saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

The angel whom the apostle beheld flying in the midst of heaven, is here called *another angel*, which seems to have puzzled even the most

moſt judicious expoſitors. But is it not probable, that ſome angel interpreter had been with him in the preceding viſion, as upon ſeveral other occaſions, to inform him of the character of that holy ſociety which he ſo exactly deſcribes. Let this probable ſuppoſition be admitted, and it ſolves the difficulty at once. This angel ſeemed ſwift to execute his commiſſion, in carrying abroad to the nations of the world, *the everlaſting goſpel*; meaning, the ancient and primitive goſpel, which had been wonderfully preſerved and handed down, even by its enemies. What a lively intimation, that the period was now arrived which ſhould not terminate till it ſpread its influence over every land. The angel likewiſe loudly called upon men to *fear God, and give him glory, becauſe* of the judgements he was to execute upon the enemies

of

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of his people, for the appointed ſeaſon of theſe judgements was approaching; therefore they ſhould learn both the impiety and the fottiſhneſs of giving homage to any creature, either in heaven, or on earth, and pay their adorations to the Almighty Creator alone. Does not every reader perceive that this is another lively prophetic intimation of the bleſſed effects which ſhould be produced by the diſcoveries of heavenly truth, with which the period here referred to ſhould be illuminated, and by the tremendous judgements that ſhould then be poured out upon the wicked. But the ſcene is further opened by the voice of the ſecond angel which is next deſcribed.

8. *And there followed another angel, ſaying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,*

city, becauſe ſhe made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

If we may judge from the event, this angel probably followed the former at a conſiderable diſtance; for he ſeems to proclaim the fall of myſtical Babylon, that city of extenſive ſway, as at hand. Her fall is not to be underſtood as coming in the way of natural decline, but in the way of judgement, and awful deſtruction, as appears from the reaſon which is ſubjoined, becauſe ſhe had deeply corrupted the nations, by every ſeducing art, and drawn them into all her abominable idolatries, here deſcribed, by making them to *drink of the* inflaming *wine of her fornication.* But another angel ſtill is introduced, before this final judgement upon Babylon is actually inflicted, thus denouncing

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vengeance upon all her friends and ſupporters.

Ver. 9. *And the third angel followed them, ſaying, with a loud voice, If any man worſhip the beaſt and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,*

Ver. 10. *The ſame ſhall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone, in the preſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of the Lamb:*

Ver. 11. *And the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no reſt day nor night, who worſhip the beaſt and his image, and whoſoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

Nothing can be more awful than this denunciation. The language is too expreſſive both of the ſevereſt temporal judgements, and of everlaſting

lasting punishment, to require to be explained. It only remains that it be deeply pondered by those who either by espousing the superstition of antichrist, or even contributing to maintain his cause, may be in danger of incurring this terrible doom. And let it be observed, that it is represented as one of the most aggravating circumstances in their misery, that it is without the smallest commiseration to alleviate its horrors; even the compassionate Lamb himself, in the midst of approving angels, beholding their torments unmoved (a).

This likewise, it appears, shall be a time of severe trial and suffering to the people of God. Therefore it is added,

Ver.

(a) I have taken no notice of the hard expression κεκερασμενου ακρατου, v. 10. as I conceive the sense which is given in our translation is well supported by the learned Gataker and others.

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Ver. 12. *Here is the patience of the ſaints: Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jeſus.*

They ſhall then be made manifeſt, by the conſtancy of their obedience, and the firmneſs of their faith, and the calmneſs of their ſubmiſſion under all their ſufferings; for through much tribulation they muſt enter into the kingdom of God: therefore the happy deliverance of the ſaints from this world of ſorrow, was impreſſed upon the mind of the apoſtle in the ſolemn and affecting manner, which he goes on to relate,

Ver. 13. *And I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write: Bleſſed are the dead, which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt*

reſt from their labours; and their works do follow them.

This voice was uttered for the conſolation of ſuffering Chriſtians, that their faith might not fail: not that the ſaints who died before that period were not happy as well as they; this is not the meaning of the expreſſion *from henceforth* in this verſe: it only means, *from the time of their death*, and denotes, that immediately after they had finiſhed their labours and ſufferings upon the earth, they ſhould enter into a moſt bleſſed reſt in heaven, where their toils and ſorrows ſhould be crowned with everlaſting joy. This was intended for the encouragement of the ſaints, particularly at that period; and the ſolemn manner in which the aſſurance is given, by the Spirit of truth himſelf, is ſtrongly fitted

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fitted to animate and comfort their fouls (a).

This viſion of the three angels in

(a) I cannot but think that the mode of interpretation, which the learned Vitringa applauds, in joining ἀπαρτι to ἀναπαυσονται, in this paſſage, is very conſtrained. Nor do I ſee any need for ſuch a tranſpoſition of this particle, which has ſo much diſturbed expoſitors: The ſenſe is eaſy and natural without it: *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord*, ἀπαρτι *from henceforth*, or rather, *from now*, if our language would admit of ſuch an expreſſion; evidently referring to the moment of their death which had juſt now been ſpoken of. As little can I ſuppoſe, that the *dead who die in the Lord* are to be underſtood only of martyrs. Not only the expreſſion does not require to be ſo reſtricted, (ſee 1 Cor xv. 18) but if it were, the conſolation would be with-held from many for whom it was certainly intended, even from all thoſe holy men who ſhall then be found ſtruggling againſt corruption, and maintaining their integrity in the midſt of danger, without being ever brought to the trial of ſealing their teſtimony with their blood.

in ſucceſſion one to another, embraces the whole of that period which commenced with the republication of the goſpel to the nations of the world, after it had been ſo long ſhut up by antichriſt, and which terminates with his deſtruction. *The firſt angel* repreſents the reformation, begun by Luther, and carried on by many zealous and able divines, by which ſo many kingdoms broke off from the dominion of antichriſt, and liberty of preaching the goſpel has been afforded in ſo many lands. The appearance of *the ſecond angel* cannot be earlier than the beginning of thoſe political convulſions, by which the fall of ſpiritual Babylon ſhall be accompliſhed. One of theſe, I conceive, has already taken place, and the effect of it has been ſo great, that it has not only ſhaken the papal dominions, but has filled almoſt all

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all Europe with conſternation. The principles to which it has given birth, are the moſt unfriendly to antichriſt's power of any that have ever been laid down; particularly that one of withholding from religion all civil ſupport, without which his kingdom cannot exiſt. If theſe principles then ſhould ſpread their influence, (and they appear to be very infectious,) it is eaſy to ſee that the fall of myſtical Babylon muſt be at no great diſtance. *The third angel* will probably appear ſoon after the ſecond; for then, the judgements upon antichriſt will haſten on apace. But his voice will be chiefly heard from the time of the *drying up of the great river Euphrates* till the battle of *Armagiddon*. During that period, every poſſible artifice will be employed in ſupport of the laſt intereſts of tyranny and ſuperſtition; and the enmity and cruelty of

of antichriſt againſt the people of God will again break forth. This will be a trying time to Chriſtians. Every ſeductive allurement, and every terrifying menace, ſhall be made uſe of, to gain their compliance with the iniquitous ſyſtem, which at the ſame time ſhall be coloured over with every ſophiſtical recommendation. It was therefore neceſſary that an antidote ſhould be provided againſt ſo great a danger. This is done by the voice of the *third angel*, who, in the clear accompliſhment of prophecy, and in the awful appearances of providence againſt theſe enemies of God, will, ſolemnly, and loudly, proclaim the guilt and danger of all who ſtand in connection with them (a).

(a) Mede thinks the preaching of the firſt angel was fulfilled about the year 720, in the Greek and Oriental churches; the evangelizing angel then flying in *the top of heaven*, that is, in a high and

and lofty place, as he did not employ mean and vulgar men for his inſtruments, but the high powers in the Chriſtian world, the emperors at Conſtantinople, Leo Iſaurus, Conſtantinus Iconomachus, Leo Armenius, Michael Balbus, and Theophilus; all of whom, but eſpecially the firſt two, by their decrees and edicts, ſtrenuouſly oppoſed image and ſaint worſhip. He thinks the preaching of this angel was heard, not only in the eaſt, but likewiſe in the weſt, in the year 790, in the ſynod of Frankfort under Charlemagne; in which the worſhip of images, and the ſecond Nicene Council, which eſtabliſhed it, were condemned. The ſecond angel he takes to be the Waldenſes and Albigenſes. The preaching of the third angel, the moſt illuſtrious of all, he underſtands to be fulfilled in the work of Luther and his ſucceſſors.—Biſhop Newton follows him exactly in all the parts of this interpretation But theſe expoſitors have, certainly, gone much too far back in ſearch of theſe angels. How could the firſt angel, for inſtance, be ſaid to preach the goſpel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, at the period they aſſign to him, when, for ages after, it continued to be corrupted, till its character was entirely defaced? Not to ſpeak of the ſtrange incongruous notion, of

emperors

emperors preaching the goſpel by decrees and edicts. And how could it be then ſaid that the hour of God's judgement was come, meaning evidently his judgement againſt Babylon, which was to terminate in her fall, when ſhe had not nearly attained the height of her domination?—Durham underſtands the preaching and proclamations of the three angels, to be nothing more than the different ſteps, or ſtages, of the work of the reformation. Firſt, Luther, preaching only againſt indulgences, purgatory, and ſuch like groſs and ſcandalous errors: afterwards, as he grows in light, aſſuming the province of the ſecond angel, declaring Rome to be Babylon, and the Pope antichriſt, and foretelling the ruin of both: and laſtly, the reformers, in the character of the third angel, requiring Chriſtians to ſeparate entirely from the communion of the Romiſh church. But did the reformers conſign to eternal miſery all who continued in the communion of that church, or were they warranted ſo to do? Yet this is properly the buſineſs of the third angel, and muſt belong to a time when God's judgements againſt her are made manifeſt. —Somewhat analogous to this laſt interpretation is that of the learned Vitringa. He underſtands the firſt angel, to denote Luther and his fellow-labourers in the reformation, who ſtood at the head of that great work. The ſecond angel, he refers

he refers to, what he calls, the ſecond age of the reformation; and ſeems to point at Calvin, the moſt diſtinguiſhed character of that period, as the perſon in whom he was realized. The third angel, he reſerves for the third age of the reformation, embracing a period of great trial and perſecution to the church. This, he thinks, began to be fulfilled in his time, in the perſecution of the Gallic reformed church, and in the preaching of faithful witneſſes, whom God raiſed up to declare his judgments againſt thoſe who ſhould apoſtatize from the faith even in theſe trying circumſtances. But he thinks it will be ſtill more fully accompliſhed, in the preaching of zealous and holy miniſters, during the great and more general affliction which ſhall precede the ſounding of the laſt trumpet.

For the reaſons I have aſſigned, and others that might be mentioned, I conceive that we are now under the voice of the ſecond angel. We are not yet ſuffering perſecution, but we are ſuffering great decline, which ſhall grow deeper and deeper till the general converſion. Previous to that time, the church ſhall be a *little one and a mean one*; nay, ſhe ſhall be *even forſaken and hated, ſo that no* man ſhall go through her, (Iſa. lx. 15, 22.) and her ſtrength and ſpirit ſhall be ſo waſted that ſhe ſhall ſeem as dead (Rom. xi. 15.) Let us not be ſurprized then, though infidelity ſhould

ſhould increaſe. Indeed I look for its increaſe; and likewiſe for the increaſe of human ſchemes of religion, under the name of Chriſtianity, in which its holy and heavenly doctrine is not to be found, till God write folly upon all theſe efforts of human wiſdom, by the univerſal impiety and corruption which they ſhall produce: after which he will manifeſt the power of his own grace and truth, in quickening a world dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. In the mean time, hatred and contempt ſhall be the lot of the faithful upon the earth, and both the arts of ſeduction, and the arm of violence, will be employed againſt them. Let us therefore liſten with ſolemn attention to our Lord's declaration, which relates as I conceive to the ſame period; "Behold, I come as a thief. Bleſſed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." Rev. xvi. 15.

VISION

VISION OF THE SON OF MAN WITH THE SICKLE IN HIS HAND.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 14. *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one ſat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a ſharp ſickle.*

Here begins the deſcription of a very awful viſion, repreſenting the judgements of God upon the wicked, to their total deſtruction. The apoſtle was again wrapt in prophetic extacy: his eyes were opened upon a new and wonderful ſcene: He beheld a ſplendid *cloud*, the emblem of

of majeſty, deſcend from heaven, till it came down to the earth [a]). In the perſon who ſat upon it, he recognized the appearance of his divine Maſter himſelf. Upon his head was a *crown of gold*, the enſign of ſovereign empire, and *in his hand was a ſharp ſickle*, the emblem of ſwift deſtruction to his enemies. While he muſed upon this auguſt and ſolemn appearance, the ſcene inſtantly filled up, and haſtened to a concluſion. See it reflected, with admirable ſimplicity, from his devout and feeling mind, in the following part of the deſcription.

Ver. 15. *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that ſat on the cloud, Thruſt in thy ſickle,*

([a]) The cloud, it is evident, muſt have appeared deſcending till it hovered upon the ground, for the perſon who ſat on it, was able to thruſt in his ſickle into the harveſt.

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ſickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harveſt of the earth is ripe.

Ver. 16. *And he that ſat on the cloud thruſt in his ſickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*

In order to ſet forth the juſtice of the puniſhment which was now to be executed, and to heighten its ſolemnity and awe, an angel, called *another* in reference to thoſe of the former viſion, is introduced coming out of the temple, expreſſing his high approbation of it; and intimating, that ſinners, by the dreadful progreſs of their wickedneſs, were become ripe for vengeance. This inſtructive apparatus over, the inſtrument of miſery is ſtretched forth, and they are cut down and deſtroyed by it.

Inſtantly another repreſentation was exhibited, ſtill more tremendous

ous than the former, of which we have the following vivid and impreſſive deſcription.

Ver. 17. *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he alſo having a ſharp ſickle.*

Ver. 18. *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the ſharp ſickle, ſaying, Thruſt in thy ſharp ſickle, and gather the cluſters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.*

Ver. 19. *And the angel thruſt in his ſickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and caſt it into the great wine-preſs of the wrath of God.*

Leſt it ſhould be thought that Chriſt himſelf was to appear in perſon, to take vengeance upon his enemies, the ſcene is again renewed under the emblem of a vintage;

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and an angel of deſtruction comes forth from *the temple in heaven*, (not the church, ſurely, for prophecy does not warrant the ſuppoſition that the church ſhall execute this judgement, but, as it were,) from the immediate preſence of God, and furniſhed likewiſe with a *ſharp ſickle*, to intimate his being the commiſſioned executioner of the divine vengeance. He ſeems, however, not to have been authoriſed to ſtrike the fatal blow, till another angel arrived, giving him inſtructions to that effect. This was the angel of juſtice, ſymbolically characteriſed by his coming forth *from the altar* of ſacrifice, and his having *power over fire*, the emblem of incenſed vengeance. In conſequence of thoſe inſtructions, he appears, not only to have *gathered the cluſters of the vine of the earth*, but to have cut down the vine itſelf, and to have caſt all into

into *the wine-preſs of the wrath of God.* Hence we learn, that the arm of power cannot deſtroy even the wicked themſelves, till the juſtice of heaven is pleaſed to commiſſion it. But when a people are become ripe for judgement, and the ſentence is gone forth againſt them, dreadful are the calamities which may then be expected. Nothing can be more tremendous than the concluding ſcene of this viſion; when the apoſtle beheld,

Ver. 20. *And the wine-preſs was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-preſs, even unto the horſe-bridles, by the ſpace of a thouſand and ſix hundred furlongs.*

The wine-preſs here, can be no other than what is called in a ſubſequent viſion, *the wine-preſs of the fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God*, and he who

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who trod it, as we are there informed, is that glorious perſon, *who hath on his veſture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lord.* It was trodden *without the city*, probably meaning the city Rome itſelf; *and blood came out of the wine-preſs* to a wide extent; and *even unto the horſes bridles*, a proverbial expreſſion denoting great and terrible ſlaughter.

The two diſtinct repreſentations of which this viſion conſiſts, in their great intent and meaning, like Pharaoh's dream, are one. Their object is to delineate the deſtruction of myſtical Babylon, which the third proclaiming angel, immediately preceding, had pronounced to be fallen. They are therefore of the ſame import with *the battle of the great day of God Almighty*, which is afterwards deſcribed, *when the beaſt and the falſe prophet were taken, and caſt into the*

the burning lake, and the remnant were ſlain with the ſword of him that ſat on the horſe, and all the fowls were filled with their fleſh. (xix. 20.) The viſion has been ſuppoſed further to intimate, that the fall of Babylon ſhall be accompliſhed by two ſeparate and ſignal ſtrokes of judgement, with a conſiderable ſpace of time intervening, ſimilar to the ſpace which intervenes between the harveſt and vintage. For this, however, there does not ſeem to be any ſatisfying reaſon. In the prophecy of Joel, to which this deſcription alludes, and which probably relates to the ſame event, no ſuch interval is to be found. On the contrary, the vintage ſeems to be haſtened, in ſuch a manner, as rather to be before, than after, the harveſt: for by the time that the harveſt was ripe for the ſickle, the preſs is ſaid to be full and the fats to overflow, Joel iii. 13.

Beſides,

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Beſides, in the more particular account of the fall of Babylon, under the vials, there is nothing that correſponds to this ſuppoſition; for, inſtead of *two*, we find no leſs than *ſeven*, ſignal ſtrokes of judgement coming upon her, by which ſhe was gradually brought down, till ſhe was finally ruined. The truth is, that, in this viſion, the harveſt and vintage are repreſented together, in order to give an adequate view of the complete deſolation and awful miſery with which her fall ſhall be attended. The appearance of Chriſt firſt, and then of an angel, to execute the tremendous puniſhment, denotes, that the diſpoſitions of providence ſhall be ſo extraordinary, as to manifeſt the power and preſence of him, *who ſhall break his enemies to pieces like a potter's veſſel*, even while he carries on his deſigns by the inſtruments of his vengeance upon

upon the earth. This ſhall be moſt of all remarkable at the concluſion of the ſcene, *when the wine-preſs was trodden without the city*, which is repreſented as his particular province *, *ſo that blood ſhall come out of it even to the horſe-bridles, by the ſpace of a thouſand and ſix hundred furlongs.* The laſt judgement on antichriſt is repreſented, upon all occaſions, by every thing that can ſtrike the mind with conſternation What can more ſtrongly deſcribe either the facility with which he and his ſupporters ſhall be deſtroyed, or the inſupportable ſufferings which they ſhall endure, than grapes cruſhed by the feet of him that treadeth the wine-preſs. But when we ſee blood iſſuing from it, and flowing deeply, to a vaſt extent, the vail is thrown

* See Iſa. lxiii. Rev. xix.

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thrown aſide, and we become almoſt witneſſes of the dreadful ſlaughter. Two circumſtances are here recorded, which deſerve particular attention. The firſt reſpects the *place* of this final deſolation, the other the *compaſs* to which it will reach. * * * * *

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* Here there is unfortunately a chaſm in the Manuſcript, which deprives us of the ingenious author's conjectures upon this curious and intereſting ſubject.

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Ver. 1. *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

Ver. 2. *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

Ver. 3. *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

Ver. 4. *Who shall not fear thee, O*

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Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations ſhall come and worſhip before thee; for thy judgements are made manifeſt.

Ver. 5. *And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the teſtimony in heaven was opened:*

Ver. 6. *And the ſeven angels came out of the temple, having the ſeven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breaſts girded with golden girdles.*

Ver. 7. *And one of the four beaſts gave unto the ſeven angels ſeven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*

Ver. 8. *And the temple was filled with ſmoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple till the ſeven plagues of the ſeven angels were fulfilled.*

This viſion exhibits a very magnificent ſcene which the apoſtle beheld, fitted to ſtrike the mind with ſolemn

ſolemn attention and awe, in the proſpect of the pouring out of the ſeven vials upon the enemies of the church of God, which were to terminate in their total overthrow. The apoſtle was again taken up into heaven, where he ſaw another ſign beſides thoſe which he had formerly deſcribed, a ſign too of great and portentous import. *He ſaw ſeven angels, having the ſeven laſt plagues, in which were filled up the wrath of God.* He ſaw likewiſe, as it were, a *ſea of glaſs mingled with fire;* and what was particularly intereſting, he ſaw *them that had gotten the victory over the beaſt, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, ſtand upon the ſea of glaſs, having the harps of God.* The ſong which they ſung he ſeems diſtinctly to have heard, and a noble act it was of adoration, doxology, and praiſe. It is not an eaſy matter to illuſtrate the myſtical import

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port of theſe ſublime and magnificent emblems. Beautiful is the interpretation of the learned and ingenious Mede: he conſiders this ſcene as deſcriptive of the deliverance which the faithful received at the time of the reformation, who, he thinks, are here repreſented, even while ſtanding upon the brim of the ſea of glaſs, in which they had been waſhing themſelves from their former pollutions, exulting in the wonders which God had wrought in their behalf, and ſinging the ſong of victory, and triumph. But, not to ſay that the appearance of the ſea of glaſs as mingled with fire, has no meaning upon this interpretation, the whole of this viſion has ſo evident a reference to the deliverance of God's ancient people out of Egypt, that one cannot help being inclined to underſtand the ſea of glaſs mingled with fire

fire in alluſion to the Red Sea, ſo famous in the hiſtory of that extraordinary event. It is ſurpriſing that the learned and good Vitringa ſhould be ſo much offended with this interpretation, calling it an idle fancy of ſome expoſitors, though he offers no reaſon againſt it, but what ariſes from the unneceſſary, and indeed, groundleſs, ſuppoſition, that the Red Sea myſtically denotes the world of the ungodly. But when we conſider this ſea of glaſs mingled with fire, in alluſion to the Red Sea, nothing can be more apt and ſtriking than the ſenſe which it exhibits. It gives us a view of the people of God, in their eſcape from myſtical Egypt, ſtanding as it were upon the oppoſite ſhore of the Red Sea; on one hand, contemplating with wonder and gratitude, their deliverance from ſpiritual thraldom; on the other, looking forward,

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ward, by faith, to the pouring out of the vials, by which the deſtruction of their enemies was to be completed. This interpretation is confirmed by other circumſtances in the deſcription. What an analogy is there, for inſtance, between the plagues upon antichriſt, and thoſe upon Egypt! The ſong which they ſing is in the ſame ſpirit with that which the Iſraelites ſang upon the ſhore of the Red Sea, and therefore is properly called the ſong of *Moſes, the ſervant of God*, that is, the ſong which he taught the children of Iſrael to ſing upon that occaſion; and, when underſtood in its ſpiritual meaning, is properly called *the ſong of the Lamb*, that is, the ſong with which he fills the mouths of his people for the far greater deliverance which he has wrought for them, of which the former was only a faint and diſtant type.

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Ver. 1. *And I heard a great voice out of the temple, ſaying to the ſeven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

Ver. 2. *And the firſt went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noiſome and grievous ſore upon the men which had the mark of the beaſt, and upon them which worſhipped his image.*

Ver. 3. *And the ſecond angel poured out his vial upon the ſea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living ſoul died in the ſea.*

Ver. 4. *And the third angel poured out*

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out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Ver. 5. *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:*

Ver. 6. *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

Ver. 7. *And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements.*

Ver. 8. *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

Ver. 9. *And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

The Notes on the preceding chapter, and the Commentary and Notes upon this passage have not been found.

POURING

THE POURING OUT OF THE FIFTH VIAL.

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Ver. 10. *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the the ſeat of the beaſt; and his kingdom was full of darkneſs, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.*

Ver. 11. *And blaſphemed the God of heaven becauſe of their pains and their ſores, and repented not of their deeds.*

By *the ſeat of the beaſt*, upon which this vial was poured out, we are to underſtand his authority and dominion; a *ſeat*, or *throne*, being the emblem of fixed authority, and of ſettled empire. The very foundations then, of antichriſt's dominion were

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to be ſhaken by the pouring out of this vial. The conſequence was, that *his kingdom was filled with darkneſs*, a deep and melancholy gloom pervaded the minds of his ſubjects. Their anxiety was ſo great, that it is expreſſed by one of the ſtrongeſt natural ſymptoms, as if *they gnawed their very tongues for pain:* yet, the ſure evidence of approaching ruin, *they repented not of their deeds*, but, in the midſt of their *pains and of their ſores*, *they blaſphemed the God of heaven*, not only by perſiſting in the ſolemn mockery of their ſuperſtition, after all the judgements they had ſuffered, but by calling in religion itſelf, to juſtify the violation of the firſt principles of nature, in ſupport of that ſyſtem of tyranny, which had ſo long been exerciſed over both the bodies and minds of men.

The pouring out of this vial ſeems at this time to be receiving its

its accompliſhment, in one of the moſt extraordinary political events, that perhaps the hiſtory of the world affords, the fall of an oppreſſive and arbitrary monarchy in France, and the eſtabliſhment of a different form of government in its room.

No where did ſuch a revolution ſeem more improbable; for no where did deſpotiſm ſeem more firmly eſtabliſhed, no where was it formed into a more perfect ſyſtem. A powerful nobility, an intereſted clergy, and a numerous army, concurred to ſupport the throne. The cauſes that wrought its overthrow were various. One of the moſt obvious and moſt immediate, was, the deſire of depreſſing a rival nation, and, with that view, forming an alliance with her colonies againſt her. In order to render this interference popular, arguments, juſtifying the cauſe of the ſubject againſt the ſovereign,

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vereign, were induſtriouſly circulated throughout the kingdom. Men eagerly read, they thought, and entered warmly into the ſubject. With deep intereſt they contemplated the example of a ſet of feeble colonies, ſcattered upon a diſtant and wide extended ſhore, combating the efforts of one of the moſt powerful governments on earth. They were taught to rejoice in their ſucceſs. But the exertions on the part of France which contributed to that ſucceſs completed the derangement of her finances, and called for an enormous increaſe of the national burthens. Recourſe was had to a remedy, plauſible, but dangerous to the monarchy. The States general were called together. They met, full of the ſpirit which many writers had long been endeavouring to diffuſe, which the court itſelf had unintentionally cheriſhed.

They

They completely overturned the antient government; if it may not, with more propriety, be ſaid to have been overturned by the ſpirit of a people living three thouſand miles diſtant. Thus, by a ſingular combination of circumſtances, that Sun of the antichriſtian world, which we have ſeen under the former vial, for more than a century, ſcorching men with the intenſeneſs of his heat, and ſpreading devaſtation all around him, was extinguiſhed in the billows of the Atlantic ocean.

This is an event ſo ſtrongly ſtamped with the hand of Providence, that a contemplative and ſerious mind cannot but regard it as of a very prognoſticating import. It is not to our purpoſe here, to examine the principles of government which the founders of the new republic have laid down. The influence of theſe principles

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principles has already ſpread to a conſiderable extent, and has occaſioned a high degree of anxiety and alarm. The meaſures which have been adopted with reſpect to religion, pointed perhaps at the deſtruction of Chriſtianity itſelf, have greatly alarmed many ſerious minds. But let the Chriſtian diſmiſs his fears: Chriſtianity requires not to be ſupported by carnal weapons and the arm of fleſh. All ſhe aſks is liberty to publiſh her doctrines, and diſpenſe her ordinances; and this, notwithſtanding their enmity againſt her, their own principles have conſtrained the French rulers to afford. Not genuine Chriſtianity and pure religion, but the fabric of ſuperſtition, muſt fall, when deprived of the props of wealth and power. Never therefore was there an event more threatening to the dominion

dominion of antichriſt than this: no wonder then that *his kingdom ſhould be full of darkneſs*, that perturbation and horror ſhould overſpread his realms. But have they repented of their wickedneſs in conſequence of the judgements of God thus viſibly falling upon them? Are they not as mad in their idolatry and ſuperſtition as before? And do not the ſupporters of idolatry and ſuperſtition groſsly blaſpheme the name of the Moſt High, when they call it the cauſe of religion, and the cauſe of God (a).

(a) The great Napier makes the pouring out of this vial to be the diminiſhing of the Roman empire, by the Turkiſh power, which aroſe about the year 1051. Jurieu underſtands it of the removal of the Popes to Avignon, and the grand ſchiſm of the weſt, and fixes its beginning to the year 1305. Vitringa and Lowman interpret it of the reformation by Luther. But Mede, Durham, Waple, and Markius, underſtand this vial to be poured

poured upon the city of Rome itſelf and to accompliſh its deſtruction: only with this difference that the laſt takes in the neighbouring part of Italy along with the city. But theſe worthy and learned expoſitors ſeem here to offend againſt their own profeſſed principles, by preferring the literal before the ſymbolical import.

THE

THE POURING OUT OF THE SIXTH VIAL.

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Ver. 12. *And the ſixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the eaſt might be prepared.*

This part of the deſcription informs us, that the judgement of this vial does properly conſiſt in *the drying up of the great river Euphrates*, whatever the meaning of that emblem may be; and that the deſign of its drying up is to *prepare the way* for certain perſons, who are here called, *the kings of the eaſt;* an em-

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blem perhaps as obſcure as the former. The ſubſequent part of the deſcription reſpects the conſequences of this judgement, in the preparations of the enemies of the truth for one great and united effort, in defence of thoſe ſyſtems of civil oppreſſion and religious deluſion, to which they formerly owed all their importance, and now, perhaps, their exiſtence itſelf. Theſe are brought about by the moſt aſſiduous and artful intrigues, as the apoſtle very plainly intimates in the following verſes:

Ver. 13. *And I ſaw three unclean ſpirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaſt, and out of the mouth of the falſe prophet.*

Ver 14. *For they are the ſpirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world,*

world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Theſe *ſpirits* are the inſtigators of revenge, and the agents of tyranny and ſuperſtition; they are fitly repreſented as *coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaſt, and out of the mouth of the falſe prophet*, as they are ſent forth to promote their intereſts, and act under their reſpective influence. They are compared to *frogs*, who delight in ſtagnant and corrupted waters; and therefore fitly denote the advocates of a baſe and corrupted policy. They are further deſcribed as of a very wicked and deviliſh temper; as full of malice and ſubtlety; as uſing every falſe and deluſive art to accompliſh their deſign. But they do not perceive that they are only bringing up the *kings of the earth*, and their armies, to receive the vengeance of Heaven,

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Heaven, in their ſignal deſtruction; in reſpect of which, the time of their mad and impious conflict is, emphatically, and awfully, ſtiled *that great day of God Almighty.* This however will be a time of trial and danger to the people of God, and therefore the Saviour is introduced addreſſing to them this gracious admonition;

Ver. 15. *Behold, I come as a thief: bleſſed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, leſt he walk naked, and they ſee his ſhame.*

The *coming of Chriſt* here, is to take vengeance upon his enemies, which to them will be ſudden and unexpected; and perhaps many of the ſaints themſelves may be inſenſible of the danger of being connected with them, till his judgements be made manifeſt, when they will

will endeavour to escape for their lives, like persons fleeing naked from a house which is broke open by thieves. Therefore watchfulness, and maintaining the graces of holiness in a lively exercise, here represented by bodily clothing, are recommended to all.

Ver. 16. *And he gathered them together unto a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.*

This is the place where the fatal battle was to be fought, and hither the kings of the earth were gathered to the final destruction (a).

The

(a) Dr. Doddridge, after several commentators, supposes that it was God who gathered them together, and subjoins the following observation. "This seems a memorable circumstance: they were the dragon's army, yet God assembled them. Such oblique intimations of the interposition of Providence are wonderfully instructive, and they are

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The great river Euphrates, upon which this vial was poured out, denotes, as I conceive, the great Germanic body, or, as it is pompouſly and impiouſly ſtiled, The Holy Roman Empire. This has been the great bulwark of *myſtical*, as that river was of *antient*, Babylon. The entire ſubjection of Germany to the empire of Charlemagne, and the forced converſion of the Saxons, by whom it was chiefly inhabited, greatly extended the dominions and encreaſed the power of the Pope. At the ſame time, the capitularies of

are ſcattered up and down in many places of the ſacred writings." The obſervation is excellent, but I am afraid the expreſſion συνηγαγεν v. 16. will not bear it out. If it is to be ſtrictly interpreted, it is more naturally referred to the old dragon himſelf, as the prime mover of the ſcheme, and the inſpirer of the agents. But Grotius ſeems rightly to underſtand it of the three impure ſpirits which were juſt now mentioned, and renders it, *fecere ut convenirent*.

of that monarch were calculated to enlarge his authority, and ſtrengthen his influence. Several of the ſucceeding emperors did much for the exaltation of the Roman See itſelf, while the whole weight of the empire was engaged in the great intereſts of the church. I am not ignorant of the contentions between the popes and the emperors reſpecting inveſtitures, nor of the factions of the Guelphs and Gibelines, and the terrible conſequences which they produced. But theſe were only private and political ſtruggles, for perſonal power or privilege, and did not affect the grand and general ſyſtem. On the contrary, we find the German biſhops and princes, ſometimes taking the part of the pope, when the emperor was againſt him; and it is highly remarkable, that, notwithſtanding all theſe contentions, the authority of the

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the pope never was exercised with a more mortifying insolence over any monarch, than over these emperors. Of this I shall only mention the following striking examples. The first is, Gregory VII's excommunicating and dethroning of the emperor Henry IV. who, when he solicited absolution from that haughty pontiff, was admitted only into the outer court of the palace where he was then upon a visit; and there, stripped of his robes, and covered with sackcloth, he waited three days and three nights, barefooted, and fasting, in the depth of winter, before he was allowed to kiss his holiness's feet. The other is the case of Frederick I. commonly stiled Barbarossa, who, after an unsuccessful war with the pope, was forced to make the most humiliating submission, not only by kissing his feet, but by holding his stir-

rup

rup while he mounted his mule. At the dawn of truth in Germany, by the preaching of John Huſs, when the church was in a ſtate of diſtraction by three different popes appearing at once, the Emperor Sigiſmund, a narrow minded and perfidious zealot, anxious to heal the ſchiſm, and at the ſame time to cruſh the doctrine of this reformer in the bud, called a general council at Conſtance with the conſent of John XXIII. who likewiſe at firſt preſided in it. Nothing can give us a ſtranger view of the church at that period, than the following liſt of the perſons who attended it. 'At this council,' ſays a good hiſtorian, 'where Sigiſmund appeared in all his glory, were preſent a prodigious number of cardinals, prelates, doctors; more than a hundred ſovereign princes, a hundred and eighty counts, two hundred barons, and

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twenty-ſeven ambaſſadors from the ſeveral European courts, who all vied with each other in luxury and magnificence. There were alſo five hundred players on inſtruments, and ſeven hundred and eighteen courtezans, who were protected by the magiſtracy.' At ſuch a council, we need not be ſurpriſed that John Huſs and Jerom of Prague ſhould be condemned to the flames. But at this council, likewiſe, a new head of the church, Martin V. was elected, who rode in proceſſion to the cathedral to receive the triple crown, the emperor and the elector of Brandenburgh walking before him, and leading his horſe by the reins. The emperor then turned his arms againſt the Huſſites, who ſuffered much perſecution, though even this experienced and powerful prince was ſeveral times defeated by Ziſca their general. The prodigi-

ous

ous efforts made by the emperor Charles V. to ſupport the intereſts of popery in Germany, in oppoſition to the reformation are known to all. But it may be proper to notice, that, even now, when ſo great a part of the empire is become proteſtant, by the very conſtitution of that great body, if a war for the intereſt of popery ſhould obtain the conſent of the diet, every proteſtant prince, however much he might remonſtrate againſt it, would be obliged to contribute his quota both of men and money to ſupport it.

From the general view then which we have taken of this vaſt bulwark of myſtical Babylon, we cannot but perceive, with what evident propriety, it is repreſented by the river Euphrates. No other power in Europe is adequate to the dignity and greatneſs of the emblem; or can ſo effectually accompliſh the purpoſe for

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for which it is introduced. When this vial ſhall be poured out, *the water of this great* political *river ſhall be dried up*, in conſequence of which, *the way of the kings of the eaſt*, for deſtroying myſtical Babylon, *ſhall be prepared.* Who theſe *kings of the eaſt* are, is a queſtion to which I ſhall not preſume to give a deciſive anſwer: Only it appears, from another part of this prophecy (a), that they are ſome of the ten kings, or governments, whom antichriſt had formerly ſubjected to his authority. It is not neceſſary, however, that they ſhould be found in the *eaſtern* part of his once extenſive empire, more

(a) Chap. xvii. 18. *And the ten horns which thou ſaweſt upon the beaſt, theſe ſhall hate the whore, and ſhall make her deſolate, and naked, and ſhall eat her fleſh, and burn her with fire.* Here the meaning can only be, *ſome* of theſe ten kings, and not the whole, otherwiſe there could then be no kings of the earth, that is, of antichriſt's territory, as we find there ſhall be, to ſtand up in his defence.

more than in any other; for, as the deſcription is entirely alluſive, thoſe perſons are *kings of the eaſt*, in the language of this prophecy, by whom myſtical Babylon ſhall be deſtroyed; as thoſe were really ſo who deſtroyed ancient Babylon. And it is not unlikely, that thoſe who have ſuffered moſt from her tyranny, ſhall be the chief inſtruments of her deſolation (a).

(a) Napier, contrary to all probability, interprets this vial of the Turks and Saracens coming from beyond the Euphrates, with Ottoman and his ſubordinate kings of the eaſtern countries, to make war againſt the Roman Empire. *The frogs* he takes to be the agents of the pope, and of Mahomet, who ſtirred up the princes of the eaſt againſt thoſe of the weſt.----Jurieu interprets the vial much in the ſame ſenſe; only, he confines it to the paſſage of the Turks into Europe, and the deſolations which they made in the pope's dominions, beginning about the year 1370, and continuing till the ſiege of Vienna under Charles V. in 1529.----Both Mede and Durham underſtand

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the river Euphrates, and *the drying up of its waters*, of the Turkiſh Empire, and its fall; and, by *the kings of the eaſt*, they underſtand the Jews, the way for whoſe converſion is then to be prepared. The latter conceives, that, prior to theſe events, the *beaſt*, preſſed with difficulties, will engage the Turk in his behalf, and that they ſhall both be ruined at the *battle of Armageddon*. But where are the Jews ever ſtiled in ſcripture the *kings of the eaſt?* Mede ſeems ſenſible of this defect, and reſts his argument chiefly upon its being the laſt vial but one, and therefore the Jews, if they are not converted now, muſt be found among the enemies of God under the following vial, and periſh with them. But this argument is of no force, unleſs it could be ſhewn that the converſion of the Jews is particularly deſcribed in theſe prophecies: but this, as will afterwards appear, the apoſtle rather ſuppoſes, than deſcribes; and beſides, there is no ſufficient reaſon to conclude that *all* the enemies of God are to be deſtroyed by the following vial.----Fleming underſtands this vial to be poured out upon the Mahometan antichriſt, whoſe power ſhall be exhauſted by it. So far he agrees with Mede and Durham: But he thinks the ultimate intent of the vial is to prepare and diſpoſe the eaſtern kings and kingdoms to renounce their heatheniſh and Mahometan errors, and to embrace

brace Chriſtianity; and thinks *the frogs* are ſent out among the eaſtern nations, to perſuade them into the belief of the Romiſh ſuperſtition, a ſcheme too abſurd to be attempted, and to lend their aſſiſtance in rooting out the ſaints, which paves the way for the battle of Armageddon.---- Markius, after Forbes, interprets *Euphrates* of the various people and their riches as it were following to Rome from every quarter, and ſtrengthening it in ſuch a manner as that it cannot be deſtroyed; and *the drying up* of that river, of their withdrawing themſelves and their riches from it. But while the former expounds *the way of the kings of the eaſt* to be the converſion of the Jews and Mahometans, he underſtands theſe *kings* to be the enemies who are to deſtroy Babylon, and gives the following whimſical reaſons why they are ſtiled *Kings of the Eaſt*. 1*ſt*, Becauſe God would call them from afar, (from a quarter from whence they were not expected) and, like the rays of the eaſtern ſun, they ſhould march very proſperouſly and ſwiftly: and, 2*d*, Becauſe they were to be ſent by Chriſt, like the ſun riſing from the deep, to miniſter to him in this work.---- Vitringa gives it as his opinion, that the myſtical *Euphrates* denotes ſome very powerful and populous kingdom of Europe, which has been a defence to the kingdom of the beaſt. This kingdom he thinks

thinks can be no other than France. This river is to *be dried up;* God in his providence ſhall order that the ſtrength and riches of that great kingdom ſhall be exhauſted, ſo that *the kings* and *princes of the earth* ſhall have no further obſtacle from it, in the time of that war, which is to be carried on for the cauſe of religion, and which ſhall lay open the way for accompliſhing the great work of reforming the church. By the *kings of the Eaſt* he underſtands kings enlightened with a purer goſpel, and by the *frogs* chiefly the Jeſuits. But this laſt part of the interpretation fact itſelf has confuted, and preſent appearances, ſo far as we can judge from them, have rendered even the former extremely improbable; as, in order to verify it, France muſt again become a kingdom anxious to ſtand up in defence of antichriſt, altho', by reaſon of her exhauſted ſtrength, unable to reſiſt the kings who ſhall combine to deſtroy him. ---I only ſubjoin the interpretation of Lowman, who ſuppoſes the river *Euphrates* to be the Adriatic Sea, which is the eaſtern boundary of the pope's dominions; and obſerves, that this vial ſeems to intend an invaſion of theſe by the Turks, who are now the eaſtern neighbours of Italy.

It would be tedious to collect all the interpretations which have been offered of the name *Armageddon*, and it could afford no entertainment, except

cept to thoſe who are verſant in that kind of learning, to arrange the various methods of forming the compound Hebrew word, of which it is ſuppoſed to conſiſt. Jerom's interpretation has, in part, been often mentioned by expoſitors, (although, as Markius juſtly obſerves, they leave us ſtill in the dark reſpecting the Hebrew words of which he compounded it). He ſeems however to have been by no means ſatisfied what was its genuine import; for he tranſlates it in all theſe different ways, *conſurrectio tecti;* five, *conſurrectio in priora;* ſed melius *mons e latrunculis*, five, *mons globoſus;* expreſſions of a very dark and enigmatical meaning, and which probably would have been little attended to, had it not been out of reſpect to their learned and venerable author.

The interpretation of Druſius, which is followed by Fleming, is more eaſy and intelligible: he renders it חרמא נדדין *the deſtruction of their army.* Markius renders it, חרמה נדעין *excidium per anathema, utter deſtruction by a curſe;* but the meaning is not different from the former: it only expreſſes it a little more emphatically. Vitringa thinks it is compounded of הר and מגדו *the mountain of Megeddo*, or, as he tranſlates it, the *mountain of deſtruction.* This indeed is the moſt common way of fitting the Hebrew to the Greek letters; it is adopted by Lowman and Waple, but

the term is chiefly underſtood in alluſion to a place of that name repeatedly mentioned in the Old Teſtament. Forbes thinks it is here alluded to in a twofold reſpect; to denote, 1*ſt*, The deſtruction of the enemies of the church, as of Jabin and Siſera, at the waters of Megeddo: 2*d*, That from this victory, ſuch mourning of the Jews ſhall ariſe, although of a different kind, as they made formerly for the death of Joſiah in the valley of Megeddo. It is eaſy to ſee that this groundleſs ſuppoſition is formed only for the purpoſe of that interpretation of the vial, which this author has thought proper to adopt. Upon the whole, I incline to think that the name *Armageddon* is chiefly introduced as a moſt ſignificant prophetical appellation, by which the field of the battle of the great day of God Almighty ſhall be diſtinguiſhed, on account of the complete and tremendous ruin in which antichriſt and his followers ſhall there be involved: and, that any alluſion it may have to Megeddo of old, can only be in reference to the deſtruction of the army of Jabin by the Iſraelites in the neighbourhood of that city. This may be glanced at, by way of heightening the deſcription, in the two following reſpects. 1*ſt*, As it was a complete and total deſtruction, not a man of that great army eſcaped. 2*d*, As it ſeems to have been accompliſhed by an immediate interpoſition of Heaven. This is not obſcurely intimated in

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theſe beautiful lines of the ſong of Deborah and Barak,

The ſtars fought from heaven,
They fought againſt Siſera from their high places;
The river Kiſhon ſwept them away,
Even the river of antiquities, the river Kiſhon *.

And we learn from Joſephus, that a tradition of this kind had been preſerved among the Jews; for he ſpeaks of a terrible tempeſt which beat upon the Canaanites, and ſo ſtupified and diſabled them, that they were trampled to death by the horſes, and torn to pieces by their own chariots.

* Lightfoot rightly ſuppoſes that this river was famous for ancient monuments of idolatry. This alone gives a meaning to its being called a river of antiquities; and it is an awful circumſtance in the puniſhment of theſe idolaters that God ſhould have made it an inſtrument of their deſtruction.

THE POURING OUT OF THE SEVENTH VIAL.

CHAP. XVI.

Ver. 17. *And the ſeventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, ſaying, It is done.*

This is the laſt judgement which is inflicted upon antichriſt's kingdom, and which terminates in the total ruin of him and his followers. Therefore the vial is repreſented as poured out into the air, as if the ſurrounding atmoſphere, the medium of life, and the elements themſelves, were become the inſtruments of their deſtruction; and therefore,

therefore, alſo, the awful voice of the Almighty is heard, intimating, in the ſhort emphatical expreſſion, *It is done*, that the meaſures of his vengeance upon them are now completed.

Ver. 18. *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightenings; and there was a great earthquake, ſuch as was not ſince men were upon the earth, ſo mighty an earthquake, and ſo great.*

Theſe expreſſions are deſcriptive of the preſence of God, when he comes to execute the fury of his vengeance upon his enemies. The ancient prophecies are full of ſimilar deſcriptions upon ſuch occaſions. Then *a fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.* Then *his lightenings lighten the world, the earth alſo beholds and trembles.* Such is the language in which they announce the ſignal

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ſignal judgements of Heaven upon the wicked, and it is the beſt comment that can be given upon this paſſage. But it ought to be obſerved, that the revolutions which ſhall take place, in conſequence of the pouring out of this vial, ſhall be the moſt aſtoniſhing that ever the world beheld. This is intimated by the great earthquake which it produced, ſuch as was not ſince men were upon the earth.

Ver. 19. *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceneſs of his wrath.*

Such are the terrible effects with which this mighty earthquake was immediately followed. Antichriſt's kingdom, here denoted by *the great city*,

city, was rent into three parts, and ſtood an awful monument of the judgement of the Almighty. *And the cities of the nations fell*, the rich communities among the various people of his dominions, which traded for his intereſt, were overthrown; *and great Babylon*, or Rome itſelf, *came in remembrance before God*, the day of vengeance, which had long ſeemed to tarry, was now arrived, when God was to execute upon her the fierceneſs of his wrath, which not only was to work her utter deſtruction, but in ſuch a terrible manner, that, like an inflaming and intoxicating draught, it was to drive her to all the madneſs of deſpair.

Ver. 20. *And every iſland fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

This accounts for the horror of the ſituation in which ſhe was involved;

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volved; for every place of refuge, or ſhelter, to which ſhe might betake herſelf in her extremity, was entirely removed.

Ver. 21. *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every ſtone about the weight of a talent, and men blaſphemed God becauſe of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

How ſudden and awful the ruin which this plague muſt produce! and how audacious the obſtinacy of theſe wretched victims of incenſed vengeance, that the greater the judgments which they ſuffer, the more their iniquities and blaſphemies are increaſed. * * * * *

SATAN

SATAN LOOSED OUT OF HIS PRISON.

CHAP. XX. 7——10.

Ver. 7. *And when the thouſand years are expired, Satan ſhall be looſed out of his priſon.*

The powerful reſtraints that had been laid upon him, during that happy period of the proſperity of the church, ſhall then be removed.

Ver. 8. *And he ſhall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather*

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them together to battle ; the number of whom is as the ſand of the ſea.

Immediately upon his releaſe he ſhall diſcover his wonted enmity againſt the church, in ſtirring up the wicked nations, the inſtruments of his malice, by every inſidious artifice, to unite their power and policy for her deſtruction. Of theſe he ſhall find abundance ready to adopt and execute his plan, even Gog and Magog, whoſe multitudes are repreſented as innumerable, like the ſand of the ſea.

Ver. 9. *And they went up on the the breadth of the earth, and compaſſed the camp of the ſaints about, and the beloved city : and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

We have here a view of the progreſs, and of the iſſue, of this formidable

midable expedition. They marched up their army of ſuch a vaſt extent, that it ſeemed to fill the whole breadth of the earth. They even *compaſſed the camp of the ſaints, and the beloved city*, and ſeem to have been juſt ready to make their grand aſſault, when they were ſuddenly deſtroyed by Heaven's almighty vengeance, in a manner as evident, and as awful, as if fire had come down from heaven to devour them.

Ver. 10. *And the devil that deceived them, was caſt into the lake of fire and brimſtone, where the beaſt and the falſe prophet are; and ſhall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever.*

What a monument of the power and juſtice of God is here. The arch enemy himſelf is at laſt viſited for all the wickedneſs which he has done. He is caſt into the unquenchable

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able lake, where he finds ſome of his chief agents before him, and he and they are tormented together, without intermiſſion, and without end.

In this prophecy we have an account of the laſt effort of the great adverſary againſt the church of Chriſt. His exertions upon the earth had been long reſtrained. He is now permitted, for a ſeaſon, to renew them: and he inſtantly goes forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to make war againſt the ſaints. Who theſe laſt inſtruments of his malice ſhall be, or in what parts of the world they ſhall be found, is one of the moſt difficult of our apocalyptical inquiries. Any light which is afforded us reſpecting it, is too feeble to direct us through the dark extended gloom which lies

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in our way. It has indeed been ſuppoſed, that the Gog and Magog here deſcribed, are the ſame with Gog and his confederates againſt whom Ezekiel's prophecy (chap. xxxviii.) is directed, and that the various circumſtances which are recorded in the ancient prophecy may help us to interpret this. But that the perſons alluded to in both prophecies are the ſame, is an opinion that cannot eaſily be maintained. I readily allow, that two or more prophecies, though they contain very different circumſtances, may relate to the ſame event: as one prophet may notice circumſtances which are omitted by another. But when an Old and a New Teſtament prophet both refer to the ſame event it is certainly very improbable, that the later ſhould deſcribe it in obſcurer and more general terms than the former, who had prophe-

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ſied of it almoſt ſeven hundred years before, and ſhould not add a ſingle circumſtance to throw further light upon it. Ezekiel, however, has decided this matter himſelf, by ſhewing that his prophecy relates to an event which muſt be long prior to that here deſcribed. For, after finiſhing the account of the deſtruction of Gog and his multitudes, he adds, *So the houſe of Iſrael ſhall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forward. They ſhall know that I am the Lord their God, who cauſed them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them into their own land, and have left none of them any more there, neither will I hide my face any more from them, for I have poured out my ſpirit upon the houſe of Iſrael, ſaith the Lord God**. Does not this lead us directly to the reſettlement of the houſe of

* Ezek. xxxix. 22, 28, 29.

of Iſrael in the land of their fathers, and by no means to the end of the millennium? Can it be imagined, that that people ſhould not have had ſufficient evidence that the Lord was their God, till after they had, not only been almoſt miraculouſly reſtored to the promiſed land, but had enjoyed a thouſand years' uninterrupted proſperity in it? that even this ſhould not ſatisfy them, till they had witneſſed the complete deſtruction of Gog and Magog, the laſt enemies of the church on earth? Beſides, upon this interpretation, the aſſurance that they ſhould continue in the divine favour, and be no more caſt off, would be unneceſſary, as the conſummation of all things muſt then be at hand. But, not to dwell longer on arguments of this kind, how is it poſſible to give a meaning to theſe, and ſimilar expreſſions in the prophecy, *I will*

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will bring thee againſt my land, that the heathen may know me when I ſhall be ſanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes †, if we refer it to that period, when there ſhall be no heathen but Gog himſelf and his multitudes; and when they ſhall all periſh in one common deſtruction?

Notwithſtanding this, it is ſtill maintained, that the leading circumſtances of the ſituation of the Iſraelites, at the time when Gog ſhall invade them, as repreſented by Ezekiel, are ſuch as can accord only with the end of the millennium. They are repreſented as rich, as living in ſecurity, and as having loſt the knowledge of the art of war, circumſtances which are ſuppoſed to indicate the lapſe of a long period of proſperity and peace. But let it be obſerved, that no reaſoning can be more

† Ezek. xxxviii. 16. See alſo v. 23.

more fallacious than drawing concluſions from what takes place in the ordinary courſe of things, to what may be expected under an extraordinary, and almoſt miraculous, diſpenſation. Who will preſume to aſſert, that He who makes the wilderneſs a fruitful field, and who has the treaſures of the world at his diſpoſal, cannot ſoon bleſs his people with plenty in their new ſituation? Let us not forget what happened to their fathers in their early hiſtory. Unlikely as it was that they ſhould be poſſeſſed of wealth, when they were groaning under their ſervitude in Egypt; yet, by the time when they left that kingdom, their property was of magnitude ſufficient to become a ſpur to the vengeance of their oppreſſors; ſo that prompted by avarice itſelf, *The enemy ſaid, I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the ſpoil.* I find no evi-

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dence from prophecy that at the invaſion of Gog, they are repreſented as having loſt the art of war, but only that they did not exerciſe it. And with reſpect to their living in ſecurity, and without apprehenſion of any hoſtile attack, it is enough to obſerve, that, their preſervation in that happy land, will probably be ſo much under the immediate protection of Heaven, that it will require little of thoſe means of defence, on which the ſtates and governments of this world have hitherto ſo greatly depended. Let me only further obſerve, that, ſo far as this ſecurity is an argument upon the point before us, it concludes more for the beginning than for the end of the millennium; for then the church muſt feel apprehenſion, if any external circumſtances can occaſion it, as they muſt have learned clearly from this prophecy in the

the Revelation, that when the thouſand years were expired, both Gog and Magog, with an immenſe multitude of people, were to come up againſt them. It appears then, that theſe prophecies relate to two very different events; and I have been at more pains to ſet this matter in a juſt and ſatisfying light, becauſe it is neceſſary to the interpretation which I am now to offer.

The firſt of theſe prophecies ſeems here to be conſidered as a type or figure of the other; and the attempt of the laſt enemies of the church on earth, ſeems to be ſet forth in alluſion to that of the laſt enemies of the ſtock of Iſrael as a diſtinct and ſeparate people. At the ſame time, it ought to be obſerved, that we are under particular diſadvantage in the interpretation of this concluding prophecy, becauſe even that

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that which is the type of it is not yet realized.

If we take up the appellation in the literal ſenſe, it will not be very difficult to determine where the country of Gog is to be found. The learned Bochart has ſhewn with great probability, that it lies on the weſt ſide of the Caſpian Sea; of this the very names of the places in that neighbourhood are a conſiderable preſumption; ſuch as Gogarene, for inſtance, and Caucaſus, which has no very remote affinity to Gog-hauſen, the ſtrong hold of Gog; though it is not eaſy to reconcile this with the Geography of John's prophecy, which places Gog and Magog in the four quarters of the earth. But the difficulties in the literal ſenſe are indeed inſurmountable, and have thrown commentators into perplexity and contradiction. How can we ſuppoſe, in the ſtrict

ſtrict and proper meaning of the terms, that an army of ſuch prodigious extent as to fill the breadth of the earth, ſhould march upon that breadth which muſt be occupied by the church, and that too, only in order to compaſs the camp of the ſaints, while in the mean time they muſt be invading it; that they ſhould actually compaſs that camp, though its boundaries were ſpread over Europe, Aſia, Africa, and America; that they ſhould obey the orders of one or two leaders, which they could not hear, and make one united attack in their different quarters, though the diſtance ſhall be ſo immenſe, they muſt be abſolute ſtrangers to each other's motions. This is a ſuppoſition, the very idea of which not only mocks probability, but baffles all conception. We muſt therefore relinquiſh the literal ſenſe of this prophecy that we may diſcover

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diſcover its myſtical and genuine import. With this view I conceive it is by no means neceſſary, to go to the extremities of the world among rude and barbarous nations, (who, it is thought, ſhall then be puſhed to its moſt diſtant corners,) in ſearch of thoſe enemies of the church who are here deſcribed. They ſhall then be found, if I miſtake not, ſettled in all the various territories where the church ſhall be eſtabliſhed; and, what may ſeem ſtrangeſt of all, they ſhall migrate to theſe ſettlements even from the boſom of the church itſelf. What has been already obſerved concerning the ſtate of things in the the time of the millennium, will ſerve greatly to illuſtrate this curious point. There we have ſeen, that, by a wonderful effuſion of the Spirit from on high, Chriſtianity ſhall beat down all oppoſition before it, and ſhall extend its heavenly influence

influence over all the earth. There we have likewiſe ſeen, what admirable order, what exalted purity, and what an ardent ſpirit of piety, and devotion, ſhall every where prevail. An evil ſeed notwithſtanding, and a root of bitterneſs, we have reaſon to believe, ſhall ſtill remain. Theſe, partly awed by the wonderful interpoſitions of Providence, and partly from other cauſes, ſhall, for a time, appear in concord and amity with the ſaints, and perhaps aſſume ſomething of the ſemblance of their holy and elevated temper. But, as their heart is all the while unchanged, the native enmity will ſtill remain, and will at length diſcover itſelf, in a deep diſlike to a ſtate of things where they can find no gratification, and in an impatience of the reſtraints under which they are held. The fury of their pent-up evil propenſities will

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laſt burſt forth with violence. Their diſorders will become apparent. They ſhall be caſt out from the communion of Chriſtians; and, finding themſelves the objects of general contempt and averſion, they will naturally ſeek to withdraw from a ſociety the enjoyments of which they can never reliſh, and the regulations of which they cannot endure. They ſhall probably find a retreat at ſome corner of that church to which they belonged. For, though the church in general ſhall be in perfect harmony, under the ſame doctrine and under the ſame order; yet its different departments will admit of ſome diſtinctions, from their natural ſituation, and from the people of which they conſiſt. Tehre ſhall be, for inſtance, not only the diſtinction of the Jewiſh and Gentile churches, but likewiſe, we may preſume the churches

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of Britain and Ireland, of Germany, Tartary, and Greece; the American and African churches, through all their extenſive diviſions, and ſo of other parts of the world. In all theſe places, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that thoſe who are enemies to the ſpirit and power of religion will find ſome corners for retreat. There they ſhall be joined from time to time, by thoſe of a ſimilar character, as they ſpring up in the countries to which they belong. At length, by the acceſſions they ſhall have received, and by their own progreſſive increaſe, they ſhall become conſiderable bodies of people; each having laws and regulations peculiar to itſelf. Thus, in a manner perfectly natural and probable, infidel and wicked nations ſhall grow up upon the borders of the churches, perhaps in all the different countries of the world.

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Theſe, by the end of the millennium, will be great and powerful, their borders gradually extending, as thoſe of the churches are contracted; and, taken all together, their numbers may be ſaid to be *like the ſand of the ſea.* They ſhall however, be reſtrained from hurting the ſaints; nor ſhall dare to make any attempt againſt them during the whole of that period. But when Satan ſhall be permitted to go forth and inſtigate their malice, then ſhall they form their ſchemes of conqueſt and devaſtation: their preparations will be quickened; their forces, through extenſive countries will be combined; they ſhall correſpond with one another in their moſt diſtant ſettlements, in order to make their ſeveral aſſaults againſt the ſaints at the ſame time. The principal attempt will probably be made upon their richeſt territory and their moſt

moſt flouriſhing ſtate, or where they are moſt ſtrongly fortified by nature itſelf, called in this prophecy *the camp of the ſaints, and the beloved city.* By ſtriking a deciſive blow againſt them there, they may hope more eaſily to diſperſe and exterminate them in other places, as well as to ſhare a ſpeedy and valuable booty. But the iſſue will be their own ſignal and total deſtruction, and that too, in an immediate and awful manner from heaven itſelf: the ſaints being wonderfully delivered, and having nothing to do but to ſtand ſtill and ſee the ſalvation of God.

But it will be aſked, with what propriety are theſe enemies diſtinguiſhed by the apellations of Gog and Magog, when they ſeem to be made up of all the different people of the world, and are actually repreſented as dwelling in the four quarters

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quarters of the earth? This queſtion is unanſwerable upon the literal interpretation; but in the prophetical ſenſe it admits of an eaſy ſolution. Nothing is more common in prophecy, than to call one thing by the name of another to which it bears a ſtriking reſemblance. Examples of this will occur ſo readily to every one who is acquainted with that ſpecies of writing, that it is almoſt unneceſſary to mention them. Papal Rome, for inſtance, is called in theſe prophecies, not only Babylon, but likewiſe Egypt *, becauſe of its idolatry, and of its being a cruel oppreſſor and perſecutor of the people of God: and Iſaiah repreſents ſome of the laſt enemies of the church by Edom, one of her ancient enemies, and calls them by that name †. Upon

* Rev. xi. 9. † Iſaiah lxiii. 3.

on this ſame principle, John was directed to proceed in the paſſage before us. It had been propheſied, before, that Gog in the land of Magog, was to be the laſt enemy of the Jews as a diſtinct people; that he was to make his attack upon them immediately before the commencement of the millennium. How natural was it then to deſcribe the laſt enemies of the church in general, after that long period of peace and proſperity had elapſed, by the appellations which belonged to thoſe who had laſt preceded them. And when we conſider the ſimilarity of their character, and the correſponding greatneſs of their combined forces, the deſcription is at once moſt ſignificant and inſtructive. Much light no doubt will be thrown upon this prophecy, when that which is its type, or emblem, ſhall be realized. In the mean time it helps

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helps the weakneſs of our conceptions to view it in connection with it.

Such then is the evidence for the ſenſe which I have given of this difficult prophecy, ſo far as any thing can be called evidence upon ſo obſcure a ſubject. The improbabilities of former interpretations are avoided; we ſee a juſt and eaſy application of the very appellations which are here made uſe of, and an important reaſon for adopting them; and every circumſtance, ſo far as we have gone, exactly ſuits the deſcription.

Let me only further obſerve, in order to make the coincidence complete, that Gog and Magog will ſtill be found in the *four quarters of the earth*, as the prophet deſcribes them, even in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of the expreſſion; and that not only with reſpect

to

to the church in general, but likewiſe with reſpect to all the departments of which it is compoſed. I ſuſpect however, that this is not the meaning of the expreſſion here, but that it is uſed in the ſenſe of *every where*, *over the wide extent of the earth*, as we find Mark applying the equivalent expreſſion, "Then ſhall he ſend his angels, and gather together his elect" *from the four winds**; undoubtedly meaning, wherever they are ſcattered over the face of the whole earth. In like manner God ſpeaks concerning Elam, *I will ſcatter Elam towards the four winds*, which he explains by ſaying, *and there ſhall be no nation where the outcaſts of Elam ſhall not come* †. Finally, when theſe enemies are ſaid to go upon *the breadth of the earth*, the prophet intimates, that when they are about to put their grand deſtroying ſcheme into

* Mark xiii. 27. † Jer. xlix. 36.

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into execution, they ſhall be found all in active preparation, in various nations, marching to and fro, joining their different armies in every country, over the whole breadth of the earth (a).

I cannot

(a) Upon this prophecy the great Napier has ſtrangely fancied, that the looſing of Satan took place in the year 1300, in the time of Boniface VIII. that he and Ottoman the Great are the Gog and Magog that are here ſpoken of, and that they and their ſucceſſors were, and ſhall be ſtirred up by Satan, to the moſt terrible wars againſt one another, with immenſe and innumerable armies, till they be deſtroyed.—Mede ſuppoſes Gog and Magog to come from thoſe Gentile nations who had eſcaped the deluge of fire at the firſt reſurrection; and particularly, that they denote the American tribes both in the ſouth and north part of that continent, among whom the goſpel has never ſpread, and who, he thinks, ſhall tranſport themſelves over the ocean and ſurround our world. —Waple underſtands theſe enemies, of the reſt of the dead, in the preceding prophecy, raiſed to a ſtate of condemnation, and ſtirred up by Satan to attack the camp of the ſaints on earth; and obſerves

I cannot quit this ſubject without requeſting the reader's indulgence while I offer ſome obſervations

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obſerves that Ezekiel calls them the multitude, or nations, of the dead. It is eaſy to ſee that theſe extraordinary fancies are the offspring of particular ſchemes of interpretation, to which they muſt be adapted, and for which they were made.—Vitringa takes up the appellations much in the literal ſenſe, and underſtands them of the Scythians, or Tartars properly ſpeaking, and thoſe who, from ſimilarity of religion or manners, might join them from other parts of the world. He thinks the millennery church will be confined either to Europe alone, or, at moſt, will extend only to ſome of the neighbouring parts of Aſia and Africa; this is what he underſtands by *the breadth of the earth*, as it contains the beſt ſituated and moſt cultivated parts of the world: he thinks the expreſſion is uſed in this ſenſe in ſcripture, and refers to Hab. i. 6. though without ſufficient reaſon to ſupport it. From the various corners in which they are ſhut up, theſe enemies of the church, he thinks, ſhall, at the determined period, burſt forth upon her, that the judgements of God ſhall overtake and deſtroy them, after which,

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tions upon the Gog of Ezekiel, in order, if poſſible to diſcover the grand event to which that prophecy is pointed. I hope it is unneceſſary to add any further reaſons to ſhew, that it relates to a very different period, and embraces a quite different object, from the prophecy we have now

which, he ſuppoſes, the church ſhall extend her wings over all the earth, How arbitrary theſe conjectures are I leave it to every reader to conſider. Not to mention, that the church, in all probability, ſhall be both very extenſive and populous upon the American continent, of which he takes no notice; the ſuppoſition of a ſecond period of ſtill higher improvement and much greater enlargement to the church after the glorious millennium ſhall have elapſed, is an idea of which none of the prophets ſeem to have had any diſcovery.—Finally, Forbes, Durham, Jurieu, Markius, Lowman, and Newton, determine little concerning the nations here referred to, but only conſider them in general as the laſt enemies of the church: both Jurieu and Newton confeſſing that who they ſhall be they cannot pretend to ſay with any degree of certainty.

now been ſurveying. It has indeed been attempted to reduce us to a dilemma in this inquiry. The war of Ezekiel's Gog, it is ſaid, muſt either be that of John's Gog and Magog, or elſe it muſt be the battle of Armageddon; becauſe the revelation takes no notice of any intermediate one: but it cannot be the battle of Armageddon, becauſe there, it is alledged, the Jews ſhall be the aggreſſors, and therefore it muſt be that laſt attempt againſt the church which John deſcribes. That the Jews are to be the aggreſſors at the battle of Armageddon, or indeed that they are to be there at all, I do not ſee any ſatisfying evidence, either in Rev. xix. 11. which is brought to prove it; or in any part of the prophetic writings. I have ſhewn ſo fully already the abſurdity of imagining that the people of God ſhall go forth with the ſword to accompliſh

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compliſh the prophecies, and to revenge themſelves of their enemies, that it is unneceſſary to inſiſt further upon it. And with reſpect to the other part of the argument, it is certainly a too haſty concluſion, that there ſhall be no warlike operation between the battle of Armageddon, and the appearance of Gog and Magog, becauſe nothing of this kind is mentioned by John in the Revelation. This laſt of the prophets is ſo much taken up with the Romiſh antichriſt in the ſecond part of his prophecy, that he pays ſcarcely any regard to what is paſſing in other parts of the world; but, after finiſhing the deſcription of his ſignal ruin, proceeds immediately to the happy ſtate of the millennium church. But it is evident that other and great revolutions muſt take place before the commencement of that happy period. Theſe however,

as

as they are connected with the reſtoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers, are left to be gathered from the intimations which the Old Teſtament prophets have given reſpecting them.

I conceive then, that Ezekiel, in the war of Gog, prophecies the fall of ſuperſtition and tyranny in the eaſt, in like manner as John has given an account of the battle of Armageddon in the weſt. This will be occaſioned by the reſettlement of the Jews in their ancient territory. But the great Turkiſh power muſt be broken before that event; and the land emptied of its inhabitants for their reception. Their migrations to that land will occaſion the firſt alarm to the various potentates which ſurround it. Vaſt bodies of them ſhall paſs through Gomer and Togarma of the north quarters, probably the whole of thoſe who are

ſcattered

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ſcattered over the various countries of Europe. Great numbers ſhall paſs through Perſia, chiefly thoſe perhaps that are of the houſe of Iſrael: and a vaſt concourſe of them, we may ſuppoſe, ſhall meet on the ſouth extremity of Judea, from Aſia on the eaſt, and from Egypt and Lybia on the weſt. The neighbouring powers however, benumbed with conſternation at ſo ſtrange a ſight, and under the energy of a divine reſtraint, ſhall not interrupt their progreſs. There they ſhall live under a government of their own, conſtructed, we may be aſſured, upon principles the moſt favourable to human happineſs. Under its equitable laws and benignant inſtitutions, and in the habitual exerciſe of ſobriety, induſtry and economy, but above all, by the bleſſing of God attending them, the people ſhall enjoy every external comfort, and

and ſhall proſper and multiply apace. But they ſhall be objects of jealouſy and vengeance to wicked princes, and to the dark votaries of ſuperſtition, who will unite their forces to exterminate a people whom they will conſider as highly dangerous to tolerate. The prime inſtigator and chief conductor of this enterpriſe is diſtinguiſhed by the name of Gog, which, I am inclined to think, is only a borrowed appellation, under which ſome remains of the broken Turkiſh power is alluded to. The reaſon of this conjecture is, becauſe this ſame Gog is introduced exciting thoſe who had been, and ſtill continued, under the influence of his extenſive ſuperſtition, and engaging them in his deſign. It is probable then that in this ancient prophecy, tranſported beyond the exiſtence of that once great and terrible empire, we contemplate

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template him who was its laſt head, who when the government was broken to pieces, being driven from his imperial city, was forced to take refuge with his ſhattered army among the mountains on the weſt ſide of the Caſpian Sea. There, we may ſuppoſe, ſupported by his Tartar auxiliaries, which are very numerous, he will endeavour to eſtabliſh the remains of his power and greatneſs; and, ſecuring the attachment of his eaſtern provinces, and fortifying their boundaries, he may ſtill be a very conſiderable independent prince; and, what is one of his ſpecific characters, he will literally be prince of Meſheck and Tubal, theſe being part of the provinces which he ſhall ſtill retain. It is a ſufficient reaſon for his being prophetically called Gog, that he proceeded originally from his country. But I ſuſpect it is intended likewiſe,

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for an obſcure intimation, that he ſhall then be found actually reſiding upon his border, and it is a good reaſon for his being ſaid to be influenced by the love of ſpoil, though acting chiefly from a different motive, that the people of that country have been long accuſtomed to plunder. Feeling himſelf ſo far recovered, and indulging a ſecret hope that he may yet be able to reconquer ſome of the countries which he had loſt, he will naturally avail himſelf of the jealouſy which will be entertained of the new and proſperous ſettlement of the Jews, and will be active in perſuading the neighbouring governments to join in one grand and deciſive enterpriſe againſt them. He ſhall ſucceed in his deſign. Great and extenſive ſhall the combination be. It ſhall conſiſt of Lybians, Ethiopians, or Egyptians, Arabians, and Perſians,

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beſides the multitudes which Gog ſhall bring forward. All theſe, blended by the ſame ſuperſtition, and filled with the ſame enmity againſt Jews and Chriſtians, ſhall be fit inſtruments for the purpoſes of their leaders; and, we learn from the prophecy, that Gog himſelf, at the head of his northern legions, who is certainly moſt intereſted in the ſucceſs of the expedition, ſhall take the chief command. How far they ſhall penetrate into the Jewiſh territory, or what ravages they ſhall commit, we cannot determine; but it ſeems as if they ſhould ſpread conſiderably over the mountains of Iſrael *, and be permitted to pillage the people †, though we read of none of them periſhing by their hand. They ſeem miraculouſly to be reſtrained from hurting their perſons ‡, the weapons which they point

* Ezek. xxxviii. 21. † Ezek. xxxix. 10. ‡ Ez. xxxix. 3.

point againſt them falling out of their hands; till, at length, that great but motley army, fretted with diſappointment, and quarrelling perhaps about the ſpoil, or from national differences entering in among them, turn their ſwords againſt one another, and are finally deſtroyed in a moſt terrible manner by the viſible judgements of Heaven. The effect of theſe extraordinary judgements will be very great. They will ſtrike the unenlightened people with conſternation and awe, and make them know and turn unto the Lord; for thus ſays God, *I will ſet my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen ſhall ſee my judgement that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.* The people likewiſe, for whom this wonderful interpoſition ſhall be made, will be regarded with high eſtimation: their policy

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policy will be admired; and the favour of Heaven ſo remarkably attending them, will add to the native evidence of goſpel truth which they ſhall then profeſs: Their civil and religious principles therefore ſhall have a rapid and extenſive ſpread, and eaſtern tyranny and ſuperſtition ſhall fly before them over all thoſe vaſt regions where they have ſo long prevailed. Such are the happy and grand effects which ſhall be occaſioned by the wonderful conduct of Providence towards that ancient people. Well then may we ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, "If the fall of them was the riches of the world, and the diminiſhing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulneſs! And if the caſting of them away be the reconciling of the world, what ſhall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!"

VISION OF THE DEAD STANDING BEFORE GOD TO JUDGEMENT.

Ver. 11,——15.

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Ver. 11. *And I ſaw a great white throne, and him that ſat on it, from whoſe face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

The throne which the apoſtle beheld, we have reaſon to believe, was of a bright and ſhining whiteneſs, as the expreſſion frequently denotes, like the cloud of glory in the tabernacle. The perſon who ſat upon it could be no other than his

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his divine Maſter himſelf, as the ſcripture repeatedly teſtifies, and the greatneſs of his majeſty, is very powerfully deſcribed by *the earth and the heaven flying away at his preſence*, ſo that they could not be found any more (a). Then

(a) I ſee no propriety in having recourſe here to a myſtical ſenſe of this ſublime and magnificent deſcription, as if only the preſent worldly œconomy were repreſented as having fled away from before the Judge. This is ſufficiently intimated by the judgement itſelf, which muſt conclude that œconomy; and beſides it is evident, that it can have no longer any exiſtence, when the world itſelf, to which it belonged, has paſſed away. This the apoſtle beheld in viſion; and, in the ſenſe in which it is plainly to be underſtood, we need not trouble ourſelves in reconciling it with other paſſages of ſcripture, as it is only a viſionary movement to ſtrike the mind with inſtant veneration, and to put it in a proper poſture for contemplating with holy awe the ſolemn and intereſting ſcene which enſues. One cannot help being ſurpriſed then to find the learned Vitringa blaming the dulneſs of his genius for not having diſcovered a meaning which the very deſcription itſelf entirely ſuperſedes.

Then the judgement did ſit, the ſolemnity and the juſtice of which, together with its awful iſſue, the following verſes moſt ſtrikingly delineate.

Ver. 12. *And I ſaw the dead ſmall and great ſtand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Here we ſee perſons of every rank and condition in life repreſented as ſtanding before the Judge. His divine character is aſſerted; He is called God; and indeed the office which he ſuſtains demonſtrates that character, as nothing leſs than divine and infinite perfection is neceſſary to diſcharge it. The judgement is repreſented as unerringly righteous;

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righteous; in alluſion to the moſt perfect forms of judicature with which we are acquainted, under the notion of *books*, in which the law of God and the actions of every man are ſuppoſed to be written. Theſe books were opened, and *another book was opened, which is the book of life*, in which the names of the redeemed are underſtood to be regiſtered, and their converſion and ſpiritual progreſs to be marked; and out of theſe books, upon the ſureſt principles of equity and truth, *the dead were judged according to their works* [a]. Ver.

[a] I underſtand not any of theſe books to be the book of conſcience as commentators have ſuppoſed. Conſcience is more properly the witneſs, who bears teſtimony to the truth of the accuſation, and obliges the the ſinner to acknowledge the juſtice of the charge. And with reſpect to the ſaints, their juſtification proceeds upon the merits of the Saviour being reckoned to their account.

Ver. 13. *And the ſea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works.*

Though the earth and the heaven, in this viſion, fled away at the preſence of the Lord, yet the dead, it appears, were previouſly yielded up, whether they had periſhed by ſea, or had died upon land, and were buried; all were delivered up, and left, with the living who remained, ſtanding before God. Their ſtation is repreſented as aerial, and awful. The earth and theſe viſible heavens in this viſion being removed, and nothing appearing through the immenſe expanſe but the world of happineſs and glory above and the unquenchable devouring lake below. Death and hell, meaning the grave(a),

(a) The word which is here tranſlated *hell*, has been commonly underſtood to ſignify the ſeparate

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who had ſeized and retained men under their dark dominion for ſo many ages, are here elegantly perſonified

ſtate both of good and bad men between death and the reſurrection: but I do not find it ſo uſed by the inſpired writers. The truth is it is never uſed in a good, but always in a bad ſenſe in ſcripture. The only paſſage in which it ſeems to refer to the inviſible world, is Luke xvi. 23. where it is evidently taken in a bad ſenſe, for the rich man in hell "lift up his eyes being in torments." But it is commonly uſed to ſignify the grave. Thus Acts ii. 27. *Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell*, the only meaning of which is, as the argument clearly determines, Thou wilt not leave my dead body in the grave, a ſenſe ſo indiſputable, that the learned Beza thought himſelf juſtified in giving it even as a tranſlation in his firſt edition of the New Teſtament, though afterwards he altered it, upon the principle of its deviating too much from the ſtrict interpretation of the terms. And Rev vi. 8. when death is riding forth in his conqueſts, *hell*, or the grave, is beautifully repreſented as following after him, like a devouring monſter, to ſwallow up thoſe whom he had killed. The expreſſion has the ſame meaning in thoſe places where death and hell are mentioned together, and even in that paſſage where it is ſaid "that the gates of hell

ſonified, and introduced reſigning all their conqueſts; after which they are caſt, along with the other enemies of the people of God, into the lake of fire, which is the ſecond death: thereby ſignificantly intimating that they ſhould never be able to hurt them any more. It is added,

Ver. 14. *And whoſoever was not found written in the book of life, was caſt into the lake of fire.*

Hence we learn, that there is no poſſible way in which a ſinner can eſcape that tremendous ſentence, but in being redeemed unto Gd by the blood of the Lamb; and, in evidence of this, his name being found in the book of life. Every other perſon, whatever hope he might

hell ſhall not prevail againſt the church," the moſt probable meaning is, that the church ſhould ſtill endure, notwithſtanding her perſecutions; the all-devouring jaws of the grave itſelf not being able to deſtroy her.

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might formerly have entertained of mercy, having nothing then to look for but the lake of fire.

This is one of the moſt ſolemn and affecting repreſentations of the laſt and general judgement that is any where to be met with. It teaches us, that it is to be a real judgement, which ſome have denied (b), for the books were opened, and

(b) Dr. M'Night ſeems to think that the characters of the righteous and the wicked ſhall be diſcriminated at the general judgment, not by any formal inquiry, but only by the kind of body in which each ſhall appear; the righteous being raiſed with glorious bodies, but the wicked, as he thinks, with fleſhly, mortal, and corruptible bodies, like thoſe in which they died, and no change being to paſs on the bodies of ſuch of them as ſhall be found alive upon the earth, at the coming of Chriſt; whence he concludes, that the whole proceſs of the judgement will be completed at once. But he ſeems not to have conſidered that there are different degrees of characters both among the righteous and the wicked, for which his hypotheſis makes no proviſion; and his

and a real diſcovery was made of the characters and conduct which they contained. It teaches us alſo that it ſhall be a moſt ſtrict and impartial judgement; for every man was judged according to his works; and that, not in kind only, but alſo in meaſure or degree. Finally, it teaches us, that none ſhall eſcape that univerſal judgement; the great ſhall not be exempted, nor the ſmall overlooked; and there is no *darkneſs or ſhadow of death* where the workers of iniquity can conceal themſelves. In vain ſhould they then cry *to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on them and cover them*, for both the earth and the heaven, according to this viſion, are fled away, and all things are naked

his ſuppoſition, that the wicked ſhall be raiſed with bodies like to thoſe in which they died, would often reverſe the diſtinctions of character among them, and make ſome of the moſt wicked to appear leſs ſo than others who had made a much ſmaller progreſs in ſin than they.

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naked and opened unto him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that these things are so, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?"

But though I have not a doubt that this vision relates to the last and general judgement, and therefore have so applied it in the interpretation, yet I conceive it is introduced in this prophecy, chiefly in respect of the enemies of God and of his people, and particularly, in respect of those who were the abettors or supporters, rather than the original inventors of their schemes of wickedness, in order to manifest beforehand their tremendous and everlasting doom. This seems perfectly in the train and spirit of the preceding predictions. The apostle had already set forth the temporal judgements in which these enemies had awfully

awfully perifhed: he had likewife fhewn us the beaft and the falfe prophet caft into the lake of fire; and, laft of all, he had fhewn us the devil himfelf caft in befide them: but neither the remnant that were flain by the fword of him that fat upon the horfe*, nor the multitudes whom the devil had deceived †, have been exhibited in their everlafting condition till this vifion, where they are made to ftand before God at the judgement, and are condemned to the fame place of torment. This is the more remarkable, as no judgement is in thefe vifions repreſented to be held upon the beaft, or the falfe prophet, or upon Satan the great deceiver; their characters being fo notorious that it feems conſidered as unneceſſary. But as many of the reſt have been drawn in occafionally upon principles of worldly policy of a more general

* Rev. xix. † Rev. xx.

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neral nature, and whoſe characters do not appear till they are fully inveſtigated, therefore they are here brought forward, and we may conſider along with them all the concealed and half covered enemies of God, both ſmall and great, in every age. Their characters are laid open, and they are thruſt down to the ſame agonizing lake, in the terrible regions of everlaſting woe. It is a further confirmation of the ſenſe which I have offered, that though the ſaints are repreſented to be preſent at the judgement, yet it ſeems not to be the deſign of this viſion to ſet before us their final condition; and therefore we read nothing of their ſentence, but only of their exemption from puniſhment, in conſequence of their names being written in the Lamb's book of life. * * * * *

FINIS.

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